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Once a trammie always a trammie

By Norma Bush

An interview with Dudley Watson, 10 July 2007

I was born in Mt Eden at Mrs Donald's Nursing Home in Herbert Road in 1917. Although I lived as a child in Devonport, I used to come to Mt Eden frequently to see my grandparents. My next association with Mt Eden was when I met my wife on 11 March 1939. When we married we lived first in Devonport, but in 1941 we shifted to 20 Paice Avenue, Mt Eden, which I bought six years later, and I have lived here ever since.

For 15 years I worked on the trams for the Auckland Transport Board (ATB), first as a conductor and then as a motorman. Before my time, the original tramway motormen and conductors were mainly ex-navy men. The ship, the *Chatham*, was paid off here in Auckland many years ago and went back to England, and the English crew had the option of staying with the navy here or finding other jobs. It was just at the time when tram transport was building up.

I had not considered working on the trams until some time in 1939, when I was making a trip by tram, and fell into conversation with a conductor I knew. He suggested to me that I apply to join the service and later mailed me application forms. I had an interview, but after hearing nothing further I discovered that you needed to be 23 years of age and married. At that stage I was engaged to be married, so we rushed to organise our wedding, because it wasn't easy to get employed by the tramways. So we married three weeks later and I was taken on by the ATB. It was very competitive and I was closely questioned at interviews. I can only assume that the requirement to be married was based on the premise that married men would be more stable and reliable.

I conducted on the Herne Bay/Three Kings route for two years, and then got my motorman's ticket, and drove along Dominion Road on the City to Mt Roskill route via Wellesley Street on Tram 245. Later I also regularly drove trams on the City to Onehunga via the Town Hall route. The ATB was run along military lines, with semi-military uniforms, which were always to be buttoned up, with cap on at all times. The uniform was checked by inspectors as they got on to a tram. The pay was poor; in those early days I was paid one shilling and ninepence

an hour at the start and then that rose gradually, at the rate of a penny an hour, up to two shillings an hour. At that stage I was notified that I was satisfactory, and so became a member of the permanent staff.

I worked first of all out of the main tram depot at Gaunt Street in the city. Most of the trams worked out of the Gaunt Street depot, but the Epsom Trambarn did the Onehunga run and other nearby routes. To get to work at Gaunt Street, and later at the Epsom depot, from Paice Avenue, I usually walked, or rode a push-bike.

Being a conductor on the trams was hard work to start with, but once you got into the swing of it, it was easy in many ways. Of course in those days there were relatively few cars on the road, and 98 per cent of city people travelled by tram, so they were heavily used. As a conductor, you were constantly moving up and down the tram, so you were, in effect, walking from the City to Mt Roskill and back eight times a day, because that was literally what you were doing. Also conductors were swung about a bit with stops and starts. The job took a toll on your legs in particular and I wore out a pair of shoes in eight months. There were plenty of rough motormen, and sometimes some of them would get annoyed with a passenger and retaliate by braking quickly as the passenger was walking to a seat.

However it was the best job I ever had, provided that I measured up to requirements, because I was my own boss and I could have a lot of fun with the passengers. It was surprising how quickly the day passed, even though we had no real break in our eight hour-plus day, and just had to eat on the run. There was no chance of slacking, and it was very tiring work, being eight hours without a break. Eventually we were given a half hour off for a meal. On the morning shift we normally had a call back to do the 'afternoon rush' trip for the 5 o'clock business closing. We were rostered for one of those per week, although we were allowed to do a maximum of two. Some men refused to do the extra shift, so the rest of us had to make up for any gaps. On the night shift you got a call forward, where you did a couple of trips in the early morning, and then your usual night shift. However when staff became scarce, we mainly worked a six day week.

I thoroughly enjoyed mixing with people on the trams, and if you got your passengers laughing it was a good day. That was not always easy, as there were plenty of 'grumps' getting on the trams, because it was World War Two and many people were finding it very difficult. I was

lucky enough to have good mates to work with on the trams and our tram, No. 245, was known by everyone as the 'glee tram'.

To become a motorman (tram driver) you had to have worked as a conductor for a set period. I was not particularly keen to become a motorman, but was asked to train, which meant 100 hours training on all the routes with a certificated motorman. Then you had to attend classes and sit a government exam. Once you had a motorman's ticket, you waited for a vacancy and applied for a run when a motorman was finishing. It was all based on seniority.

The first trams ran at 6.00am and the last at midnight. There was a five minute frequency on main routes, such as Onehunga, Mt Roskill and Three Kings. Work was organised on a pattern of shift: morning shift one week and night shift the next. However, because of catering for work travel peaks, the pattern of shifts was complex. The day shift had a staggered start, anywhere from 5.00am to 6.30am, and finished between 1.30pm and 2.15pm. The night shift started at 4.00pm and onwards, with staggered finishing times till 12.30pm. Two different broken shifts ran either from 6.00am till 9.30am, followed by 1.30pm till 6.00pm, or 7.00am till 10.00am and then 2.00pm till 8.00pm. Broken shifts were more difficult to cope with, and for that you received twopence an hour more.

Mostly a motorman and conductor worked together continuously and developed a close relationship, in fact became real mates. At the start you had no choice with whom you worked, but then, when a conductor or motorman quit, the position was put up on the board and the most senior applicant was chosen. I worked initially with a male conductor, but when he moved unto a motorman position I worked with a woman conductor for many years on two different routes and we were friends for years afterwards.

To become an inspector, you had to apply and go through separate training. Inspectors had the potential to make life very difficult for you, but there were all sorts and some were quite reasonable. No women ever became inspectors, although there were two women supervisors appointed to oversee the women.

Facilities at Gaunt Street were primitive in the early days, being really just the bare essentials, with no cafeteria. Everything was done on the run. The usual practice was to buy a billy of tea from a dairy and drink it on the road, and then return the billy on the trip back.

During a working day, your hands became covered with copper from the pennies in the change which you rattled to attract attention as you walked through the tram, so my wife was advised to cut my sandwiches into quarters so that I could hold them by the corner of the crust and not eat that part.

Union membership was compulsory, as was membership of the Transport Club. Our union was always struggling for better wages and conditions. In the early 1950s we had a big stop-work meeting in Karangahape Road, and all the trams were laid off. After that strike, conditions did improve a bit. Our wages probably were comparable with other jobs at the time and we had free travel on trams, although that was not available for your wife. But we really had little time to enjoy the opportunity for free travel. At the start, the ATB offered two weeks holiday per year, which later increased to three weeks every nine months, during which you received the basic pay, not your averaged pay. During my first holiday, we went to Onetangi for two weeks, but apart from that and a trip on the gulf which I did to help a mate with his boat, we did not have much opportunity to go away. I mainly spent holidays working around the house and property.

Trams were power driven and geared. The driver used a controller at each end of the tram. He worked the handle of the controller around notches (similar to gears in a motorcar) which automatically increased or decreased the speed. He could cut off altogether and the tram would coast. If he was going straight ahead at an intersection, he coasted over it, and the overhead wheel running along the overhead wires controlled the points at the intersections. If he was turning a corner he went with full power on and the wheel flicked the points at the corner to ensure the tram turned. However there were some intersections where the points were not automatically controlled and the conductor had to get out and pull the points over at the edge of the footpath. At the Customs Street/Queen Street corner, a man sat in a box and controlled all the points. At Wellesley Street/Queen Street corner, the control man sat in a box on top of a pole. Trams were completely reversible, so that the motorman simply drove from the other end of the tram to do a reverse trip.

The original trams were small, straight-sided and open-fronted, and these were followed by larger version of the same, and then by the 'pot belly' version which had slightly rounded sides, but with the same

controls. This was followed by the '253' which was the first of what was to be the new fleet. It was initially more difficult to drive because it was based on a different system of controls. However only two of these new trams were purchased before a decision was taken to change over to trolley buses, which in my opinion was the biggest mistake that was ever made in public transport in Auckland, and I don't say that simply because I was a tram driver.

The trams were always well maintained. They were taken out of service regularly, completely overhauled, stripped down and the wheels replaced with new ones. If there was any question of a problem during a run, your tram was taken into the workshop and replaced for the next day. I always felt completely secure with my trams.

Accidents involving trams occurred occasionally. I once had the whole front torn off my tram on Mt Eden Road outside the Crystal Palace, where a timber lorry with stanchions at the side hooked on to my tram and ripped the front of it off along with all the controls. I was not seriously injured but I had pieces of glass removed from me for days afterwards. How to remove my tram became a real problem because all the gears were jammed, so eventually they pushed me backwards down through the crossover at the junction with Watling Street where they hooked me on to another tram and towed me to the Epsom depot.

Most drivers had some smashes. I once collided with a car in Symonds Street. Having new wheels on the tram I was moving reasonably fast when suddenly I saw a car on the tracks in front of me. After the collision I realised that the driver was a mate of mine, and he told me that he had moved across the tracks to turn down Wakefield Street and hadn't noticed the tram coming.

As a trammie, you had your regulars. As a conductor on the Herne Bay/Three Kings route, No 215 was my tram and people waited to catch it. Sometimes I used to have them in stitches. Sometimes little episodes were amusing but embarrassing for the passenger. I remember one woman getting on with difficulty, then bending down, stepping out of her bloomers and folding them over her arm like a scarf. Then again, people told you stories about their lives or families. It was as though you became part of their lives. I was lucky and never had any threatening experiences, and only the occasional drunk. For me it was a fun job, but I think that by adopting the good natured, humorous approach, I helped to determine the kind of experiences I had. For a

good many people it was their personality that engendered problems. So, all in all, it was a completely different experience working on the trams compared with driving a bus.

When women first became conductors during World War 2, almost all the male tramway employees were dead opposed to having women working with them. They felt it wasn't a woman's job. But the point was that we lacked manpower, and we were working day and night just to keep the service going. I felt that they had to get extra help. At first, most of the women had a rough time of it from the men. However, although some of the men never really accepted women, for the most part once the women had settled in good relationships were maintained. I always did a lot of training work on my trams with new staff, and the inspector who was running the schools would bring women to me for training and would advise me when they needed special help.

I was still working for the tramway when trams finally ceased operating in 1956. There was a saying among us, 'Once a trammie, always a trammie.' It was true. Most of us would never drive a bus. There was huge opposition to pulling the trams off the road. All of us drivers were opposed to it and there were lots of influential people who spoke out against it. People asked 'What's wrong with the trams?' The ridiculous part of it was that the ATB had just started to modernise with new, sleeker trams. However, it was a case of 'wheels within wheels'. Our boss went overseas to see trolley buses and came home with a Daimler car, and then the next thing was Auckland was getting Daimler buses. So you put two and two together and I get four! The service has never been the same with trolley buses or with buses.

With trams, we could shift large numbers of people with the minimum of stoppage for other traffic. There was a limit to the number of people we could carry at a time, being for the 56-seater trams, an additional 16 standing inside and five on each platform, but I packed 100 people on my tram one night going out to Three Kings. Because trams ran along the centre of the road, they didn't get held up by other traffic as buses do, so they could keep to a timetable with ease, and there was no need to manoeuvre in and out of stops. Modern buses, especially, are huge and cumbersome on city streets compared with the old trams.

Finally we were moved to the Epsom Trambarn site and trolley buses were introduced to Dominion Road to replace the trams. I was shifted to the Onehunga tram route along Manukau Road. Once the trams

were gone, I decided that I would not drive trolley buses and I resigned. Following that, I took a position with Harman Buildings, ordering and cutting timber for four years. From there I went into Burns Philp in the grocery trade for ten years, then to the Liquor Store in Ponsonby Road, and retired from there.

There are not too many trammies left now! Trams have been off the road for over 50 years. I will be 90 in September 2007, but I remember my days as a trammie as the best days of my life.

A trammie in uniform
Source unknown

The Epsom Community Centre Inc

By Jeanette Grant

This is a companion article to Valerie Sherwood's account of 'How the fight for the Epsom Community House was won' in *Prospect* Vol 6, 2007.

In June 1915 the three acre site situated on the corner of Gillies Avenue and Kimberley Road was purchased by the then Epsom Road Board to set up a pumping station. This was followed by the construction of a small stone house for a staff member of the water-works department and from the 1920s this site was used as an Auckland City Works Department depot.

During the Depression, relief workers turned the volcanic wasteland over the road into Melville Park. Stone quarried there was used for a second stone building and for the stone walls around the centre. By 1982, the buildings on the site consisted of the original brick pumphouse, several garages and two buildings of the local volcanic stone. The smaller had been a manager's cottage; the larger a vehicle store with small office in one corner.

In the late 1970s, local residents had begun agitating for a community centre, and an Epsom Community Committee was established. Several possible sites were looked at, including that of the Epsom Library in Manukau Road. In 1980 it was suggested that as the Gillies Avenue depot was being merged with the depot in Normanby Road, Mt Eden, its site would then be surplus to council requirements, although they would need to retain the pumping station. (This pumphouse is of major drainage significance as there is a large underground storage tank and two large pumps which work 24 hours a day. Access for maintenance at any time is essential.)

According to the September 1981 issue of *Epsom News* the initial recommendation was that:

> . . . the site be divided in half; the section with the two stone houses to be retained — and the remaining land to be sold for community use . . . after a lengthy battle the Auckland City Council resolved:.
>
> A) Half of the Epsom Works depot site be designated for

community use and development [ie the half with the two stone buildings currently in place].
B) The other half of the site [ie the open grassy area abutting Kimberley Avenue] be available for three years for community use at the end of which time a final decision will be made (clearly dependent upon the use of the land in the interim).

A Gala Day was held on 5 December 1981 by the Epsom Community Committee to raise funds, and the ACC gave a grant of $500. It was also agreed that the zip heater, tables, seats, garages and caravan would stay on site and that the tenants in the stone cottage would be given notice.

The official opening occurred on Sunday 4 April 1982, when the Mayor Colin Kay formally handed over the keys, and the buildings and grounds were opened for public inspection. The centre opened for business on Monday 5 April 1982, with hours from 9.30am to 12.30pm, Monday to Friday. The first committee consisted of Mark Winger in the Chair, Leslie Bassett, Lynne Buckle, Bev Clark, Brian Cowlrick, Lois Cox, Carol Freeman and Marilyn Petersen. At first there were no fixed room charges. Donations were accepted and it was optimistically expected that rooms would be left in order after each meeting. Barnardos approached the centre in June, asking to rent one small room as an office and to run a morning creche session once a week. They were there for the next 20 years.

Fund raising 'garage sale' in progress, 1983

The site was initially divided as recommended, but in April 1985 the centre had its licence to use this adjacent land renewed for another three years. As well as providing a safe play area for children, this space had been used for such diverse activities as community garage sales, a Boy Scout camp-out, a children's Christmas party and a children's

gardening club. Without the carparking spaces it provided, roadside parking in the surrounding streets could have been a problem. Use of it continued until the construction of the Eden–Epsom Kindergarten on the Kimberley Road frontage in 1996.

The first management committee consisted of members from the original Epsom Community Committee under the chairmanship of Mark Winger, and for the first six months Lyn Buckle acted as a volunteer coordinator. Auckland City then appointed Mrs Rae Martell, a Social Services student, for three months from 6 September to 29 November. She was succeeded by David McGerty, until 15 July 1983.

Finally, with the aid of a council grant, Mrs Wendy Begg was employed for 20 hours a week from 26 Sept 1983. She took over at noon, but up till then volunteer 'hostesses' continued to be rostered during the mornings to welcome the public, make morning tea and generally keep the place tidy. It was very much a 'hands-on' business in these early years, with committee members getting down on their hands and knees to scrub the place. When Wendy left in1985, Lynne Lett took her place and was coordinator until April 1988, when she was succeeded by Judy Elton. Sue Mullane held the post from 1992–4 but her replacement in March 1994, Susan Myers, only stayed for two weeks and Judy Williams stepped in to hold the fort until Karen Smith was appointed in April 1994, a position she filled until Nivedita Paul took over on 1 July 2007. Office hours were from 9am till 2pm each day, but in 2009 were extended to 3pm, and the centre itself is available for use from 8am until midnight.

In 1983, permission was given by the council property officer to landscape the grounds and plan a children's playground, and the Sport & Recreation Fund gave a $1000 grant. In her annual report, Lyn Buckle thanked the Sir John Logan Campbell Estate for a donation of $3000 towards the development of the playground area, as well as all those who had helped fund-raise through garage sales, cake stalls, raffles, etc.

With the assistance of a team from the Justice Department Periodic Detention Centre, the stone walls surrounding the area were repaired, a new stone wall was built on one boundary and stone walls formed around the gardens. Steps were built to the carpark and access paved to the front entrance.

The transformation: Epsom Community Centre in 1982 (above) and in 2007 (below). Since 1982 the trees have grown, and an office block now links the two stone buildings.

CHAIRMEN OF THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE			
1982	Mark Winger	1991	Irene Hickman
1983	Lynne Buckle	1994	Ted Williams
1984	Kevin Gilligan	1995	Keith Wilkie
1985	Richard Cameron	1997	Don Ruxton
1986	Shirley Andrews	1998	Jeanette Grant
1988	Bill McCleary	2008	Ray McDonald

In January 1985 the construction of a children's playground was begun and a school holiday programme was set up.

The Epsom Community Creche began in 1986 in the smaller cottage to care for the children of parents using the centre. It took a maximum of ten children and charged $1.50 an hour. Demand proved sufficient for it to become financially viable, and it was originally overseen by the centre's management committee. The first supervisor was Helen Sharpe, but Nan Corson has been the supervisor since 1990. In 1998 Don Ruxton, the chairman of the centre's management committee, was responsible for organising its own board of trustees, so the creche is now an independent organisation, renting space at the centre.

It is however considered a special tenant, and the building and grounds have been developed to suit its needs. The large deck built at the rear provides a covered play area with weatherproof side curtains which can be lowered for shelter. In 2005 lights were added to enable it to be used in gloomy weather. Closing in part of this deck to create a small storeroom/playroom in 1999 increased the usable floor area, so it is now licensed to care for 15 children. In 2007 it took over another room in the smaller stone building to serve as an office.

In 1991 Auckland City Council accepted recommendations that part of the site on the Kimberley Road corner be leased to build a kindergarten. Fund-raising for this proceeded on the advertised understanding that this new building would also be partly for community use. Between 1994 and 1996 there was considerable controversy, which went as far as the Environment Court, over the provision of additional parking spaces and the consequent loss of green areas on site. In 2000 Auckland City took over the building and debts from the Eden Epsom Community Education Trust Ltd, and now leases it to the Kindergarten Association. It was not until 2001 that the small 'Kimberley Room' was made available for community use, administered

by the centre. However few groups have proved interested in using it, as it is physically separate from the rest of the centre. Two other small rooms which were originally dedicated for community use have always been used by the kindergarten and will continue to be so as they are totally unsuitable for anything else. Moreover as the kindergarten is prepared to charge 'packdown fees' in the vicinity of $500 to clear the main room of their equipment so it can be used for any other function, it is most unlikely that this large 'community space' will ever be used for its advertised purpose.

As usage of the centre increased, the lack of a large room became an obvious drawback and for several years the management committee was active in organising fund-raising eg 'community garage sales', fashion shows, vegetable cooperatives, etc The result was the construction in 1992 of the 'Ranfurly Room' at the rear of the larger building, where one of the storage garages stood. It cost $34,000 to construct and its opening was celebrated by a big party on 4 July 1992. This additional freestanding room belongs to the centre, not Auckland City, and its maintenance is the responsibility of the centre. It holds 45 people comfortably, and in 2002 was improved with the addition of a modern kitchen/storage unit along the western wall. Until the gutting of the larger stone building in 1998/9 made it possible to use it as a 'hall', this was the largest room available and it is still very much in demand.

The site and stone buildings belong to the Auckland City Council but a local management committee is elected annually at the mid-year AGM. The 2007 committee under the chairmanship of Jeanette Grant decided to mark the 25th anniversary of the opening of the centre with a souvenir booklet, a DVD of photos of the centre past and present, an open day on 31 March and a reunion evening for people who had been closely involved with it over those years.

One member who has been associated with the centre from the earliest years contributed this memoir.

> By the mid '80s there was a flourishing embroidery group at the Epsom Community House, as it was then known, and I joined as an enthusiastic newcomer to embroidery. We met in what is now the Eden–Epsom room, which was very different from its present form.
>
> The room went straight up into the roof rafters; there was no

ceiling at all. I don't remember any curtains on the windows and it was extremely cold in winter, but blissfully cool in summer. As far as I can remember we didn't bother with a 'cuppa'. But I could be wrong about that.

My most vivid memories are of the trials and tribulations of 'spending a penny'. The toilet was right at the back, at the N.E. corner of the buildings about where the kitchen is today. To get to it involved climbing around and over the miscellaneous impedimenta left over from the days when the house was a City Council depot. There were bits of timber, worn out tools, broken chairs, coils of wire, etc, etc. There was one single small light bulb hanging from the rafters and no windows at all! Worst of all, there were enormous cobwebs, thickly covered in layers of dust, hanging down from the roof space. Big cobwebs! Big spiders! We didn't linger long in that vicinity! B.B.

As part of a city-wide rationalisation of community centres, 1995 saw the end of individual leases and the introduction of standard management agreements. Each centre must now provide Auckland City with a business plan in a specified format when they apply for their annual operating grant, which used to be around $12,000–15,000 a year. Since 2007 the centre has received no financial assistance, apart from basic maintenance.

When the major 1998 upgrade started, the larger stone building contained the office, toilets and two medium-sized rooms. The smaller was referred to as 'the kitchen', the other as 'the lounge' although both had been fitted with sink units and 'zip' heaters. Between Dec 1998 and March 1999 all except the toilets were gutted and a modern kitchen installed at the eastern end. The rest of the interior became a single large room with a folding divider to enable it to be split it into two — named the 'Epsom' and 'Eden' rooms.

Two sections of stone were left visible as feature walls. The architect was also very taken with the appearance of the structural beams and left a 'well' in the ceiling of the Epsom room to display them. Unfortunately this ruined the acoustics of the room as well as making it very dark, as there were no lights in this central area. When winter came, the power bills shot up as all the heat went straight up and out through the unlined tiles. The following year, the management committee convinced the

council to have a proper ceiling with light fittings installed. A door directly onto the new deck had been cut through the stone walls, but in practice this was never used and in 2004 it was converted to windows.

While the renovations were progressing it was planned to simultaneously construct a new block which would link the two stone buildings and contain the office, kitchen unit, storeroom, lockers, toilet and cleaner's cupboard. Unfortunately the council architect had failed to apply for a building consent for this new work, so there was a considerable delay while this was processed, and the coordinator had to operate from home for several weeks as the original office had been demolished. When this new building was only four years old, a serious problem with the foundations was noted. Investigation showed that no drainage or ventilation for the underfloor area had been provided, and the bearer beams on one side were permanently waterlogged. There was major rot which had caused the floor to sag and shake. This was repaired in 2004.

External access to this office block is from the rear carpark via a new path and a new sunny deck. The management committee had an 'Archgola' awning added to the deck in 2003 which protects the doorways from the weather and makes the deck usable in all seasons. It cuts the ultraviolet radiation without reducing the amount of light. In addition, the provision of a wooden walkway between the stone building and the Ranfurly Room turned an unsightly gap into a convenient access way to the deck from the Gillies Avenue entrance.

Another small change at this time which made a big difference to the comfort of centre users was the sealing over of the steep flight of stone stairs which used to be right outside the entrance to the Ranfurly Room. For some time these had had a seat blocking them, as a safety measure, but when the council finally agreed to a request to cover them over, the centre gained a safe and useful seating area under the shelter of the verandah.

The 1998/9 upgrade of the building by Auckland City was followed by the full landscaping of the grounds. Ms Yvonne Weber was the landscape architect, and proved to have the rare ability to listen to what the management committee wanted and work out how to provide it. Access from the carpark became easy and attractive. The grounds used by the creche were rationalised and securely fenced. Two huge umbrellas were bought to shade the sandpit and the barbecue area.

Extra garden seating was provided. With all the playing area now to the east, supervision is much simpler and the replacement of the old steps with a new path from the carpark at the rear makes pushchair access much easier. This carpark now has a designated five-minute 'drop off' parking spot beside the path. A further major upgrade in 2009 has created an attractive, safe and stimulating play area.

Unfortunately, responsibility for the maintenance of the grounds was taken over by Auckland City in 2004, and their workers proved less than satisfactory. Weeds throve, shrubs were allowed to straggle; camellias were ringbarked by weedeaters. An attractive rock garden beside the Gillies Avenue entrance had been established by volunteers and cherished by them for many years. It was first left to be strangled in weeds and then, when repeated emails finally stimulated action, *all* the plants were ripped out and the area smothered in bark.

In 2006 it was finally agreed that the council would continue to cut lawns, but the management committee would take back responsibility for actual garden areas. Some major replanting was done professionally at the centre's expense, and regular weeding is now keeping the gardens looking cared for.

For the first 15 years, most car parking was on a gravelled area accessed from Kimberley Road close to the corner with Gillies Avenue. There was sealed vehicular access from Gillies Avenue which went past the main building and down past the pumphouse on the lower level. For some years there were a couple of garages down there used as storage. They proved extremely useful in the early years when fund-raising included such events as 'garage sales', and in the early 1990s a vege co-op. However these were removed when the completion of the kindergarten building was followed by the total reorganisation of the grounds. There was considerable controversy over the exact form this should take, and the debate went as far as the Environment Court in 1996.

Finally the corner gateway was blocked off and the original carpark grassed over. This took some years to grow satisfactorily but is now a pleasant area with a barbecue, seating, and a large shade umbrella. There was some debate about installing a petanque court there but the 'fad' for this passed before it was done. The eastern section, which had been a grassy area, was turned into a carpark for the use of both the centre and the kindergarten. Half was sealed and half laid with gro-

blocks to reduce the amount of run-off. Even so the gardens alongside have been totally submerged on several occasions after prolonged heavy rain. Access is both from Gillies Avenue (entry only) and from Kimberley Road.

In contrast to many other centres which are fully outfitted by Auckland City, nearly all the equipment has been purchased by, and belongs to, the Epsom Community Centre Inc. As well as curtains and carpets, and modern office and kitchen equipment, the centre owns tables and chairs, whiteboards and noticeboards, TVs and videos, sound equipment, overhead projectors and screens. There are banks of lockers where regular groups can keep their own equipment securely, while outside there are areas of sheltered seating, a built-in barbecue and a very large shade umbrella which folds into a lockable case.

The Epsom Community Centre in 2010 is active and financially viable and does not compete with nearby Auckland Normal Intermediate for evening classes, but offers well equipped premises and well lit offstreet parking at moderate rentals. Commercial users pay a slightly higher room rental than non-profit-making clubs. These users range from preschoolers at the Epsom Community Creche to auctioneers, fitness classes and a variety of support groups. Many community groups, such as the Ys Walkers, are almost as old as the centre itself. There are bridge groups and creative groups such as embroidery, quilting and painting. In addition a wide range of clubs hold weekly or monthly meetings. These include such diverse groups as the Epsom & Eden District Historical Society Inc, the Peugeot Car Club (Ak) Inc, the International John Denver Memorial Foundation and the United Nations Association of NZ.

During any one year, over 55,000 people make use of the centre. Details about the centre and its current programmes are available online at the website which was designed in 2005 by Julian Eden of VRAMM: epsomcommunitycentre.org.nz

COMMUNITY CENTRE COORDINATORS			
Apr–Sep 1982	Lynne Buckle	Apr 1988	Judy Elton
Sep–Nov 1982	Rae Martell	1992–1994	Sue Mullane
Jan–July 1983	David McGerty	Mar 1994	Susan Myers/Judy Williams
1983–1985	Wendy Begg	Apr 1994	Karen Smith
1985–1988	Lynne Lett	July 2007	Nivedita Paul

The Epsom Bowling Club's early years, 1900–2010

By Jack Baker

One hundred and four years ago, on 3 September 1906, a public meeting was held in the Epsom Public Hall situated in Manukau Road, just across from Crakers at the top of Onslow Avenue. A Mr E.W. Burton was in the Chair and there it was proposed and seconded 'that the meeting resolves to form an Epsom Bowling & Croquet Club'.

A week earlier, seven men had met in Mr Jones' residence in King George Avenue and contributed 5/- each to advertise this 3 September meeting, and to circularize the 60 or so residents in the adjoining area. These seven men were Messrs Burton, Eagleton, Farrington, Harrison, Jones, Pollard and Watkins.

At this meeting subcommittees were set up to deal with the purchase of land, the costs of forming a green and the erection of a pavilion, finance, greenkeeper and accessories. The meeting found £1.12.0 to cover the initial expenses, and another meeting three weeks later carried these resolutions:

That Sir John Logan Campbell be elected first patron.
That Mr Burton be elected first president.
That Messrs Craig and Jones be elected vice presidents.
That the annual sub be £2.2.0 and that the committee be appointed trustees.
Mr S. Harrison was elected first secretary and treasurer.

The committee at its first meeting in 1906 passed the resolution 'that it be left to the President and Secretary to deal with the purchase of three sections of land comprising ¾ acre on The Drive, the property of Mr Southey Baker'. This they did, and Mr Baker agreed to a figure of £490; this now comprises the No.1 and No.2 greens. Further land was purchased in 1917.

Much negotiation and fund-raising followed. The first Euchre Party in November 1906 was so successful that £9.17.3 was handed to the treasurer. Ten evenings a year were held on the Wednesday nearest the full moon, because Epsom was not well lit and there were just tracks through the grass outside. The secretary had to make special representation to the Epsom Road Board asking that gorse be cleared and a footpath be formed, tarred and sanded from Merivale Avenue to Bowling Avenue.

The members in front of the pavilion at the opening in 1907

Information and photograph from:
Epsom Bowling Club, *1906–1956 Golden Jubilee of the Epsom Bowling Club (Inc) Souvenir Booklet*, printed by Wright & Jaques Ltd, Auckland.

Concerts were held in the Epsom Hall, and at one 300 tickets were sold at sixpence and a shilling, and £6.10.0 was raised. Complimentary picture evenings were later held in the Lyric Theatre, Symonds Street, which became the State Theatre. The club also raised £20 by renting the fence along The Drive for poster displays.

The first pavilion was built by A. Pollard & Sons early in 1907 for £138.2.6. Mr Carpenter was contracted for the greens formation. The club purchased the seed, and under the expert eyes of Messrs Craig and Harrison working bees sowed the first grass. Such was the hard work and expertise that the gardens were planted, greens weeded and all was neat and trim for the big day. This is how the *New Zealand Herald* of 26 November 1907 reported the first opening day:

> So on Sat. 23 Nov. 1907 the Epsom Bowling & Croquet Club with flags flying, music by Bourkes Orchestra, refreshments flowing and camaraderie abounding set off on the Bowling career. Mrs Burton threw the first jack and Mrs Hill struck the first croquet ball.

Because of increased interest in bowls, the Croquet Club moved amicably to Gillies Avenue in 1930, with a donation of £40.0.0.

The club finished its first year with 70 members. The first greenkeeper was Mr Carpenter. He was guaranteed two days work a week in 1907 at seven shillings a day, and members were allowed to employ him privately on the other days.

During the club's first year an acmena hedge was planted along Bowling Avenue, and on this was hung wire netting and scrim in an attempt to stop the strong wind. What a mess that became. Every annual report mentioned it was 'likely to last another year' which it did until 1955, when a stalwart team of axemen had one heck of a job to clear it. My Dad even dragged me down a few times.

In July 1915 subs were raised to £3.3.0 and support was given towards a convalescent home for soldiers in Epsom. The Saturday draw then closed at 2.15pm. A reminder surely of working days when six days a week included Saturdays from 9am to 1pm.

Work began in 1918 on shifting the old pavilion to its present site, and an earlier edition of the present building was built in 1924 for £1229.17.5. The greenkeeper's cottage was completed in May 1922 with a total cost to the club of £470. Mr Wallace supervised at 3 shillings an hour and had to supply scaffolding, etc.

I well remember 11.45pm on 16 March 1940 being awoken when a major fire disaster was narrowly averted. Fire broke out in scrims and mats stored under the stairs, but prompt action by the fire brigade prevented a complete disaster. The club received £683.13.6. from the insurance company for damage to the pavilion, furniture, lockers and bowls. Nearby clubs came willingly to help, for all inter-club matches and tournaments, etc, were cancelled for the balance of the season. The pavilion was modernized in 1963, and in 1967 the lounge downstairs was created from an open verandah.

Our first illegal bar (so long ago as to be outside the Statute of Limitations) was a small room in the old tool shed. Money was cunningly put in a box labelled 'Contributions'. Despite this camouflage, the innocent treasurer, who must have been a 'wowser', in his Cash A/c came out in the open with 'Takings from the Bar' — so much!

During WW2 the club sent food parcels to members and their families overseas. I was fortunate enough to receive one. The pavilion was used by the Red Cross for meetings. On 24 April 1942, anti-air raid fighting equipment was obtained for £50, and Mr Jones next door was our first official fire watcher. Members later set up a roster. I still have my EPS messenger armband. From October 1942 the Epsom RSA (now defunct) used this hall once a week for meetings before shifting to a Nissen hut next to Ravlic's fish & chip shop on the corner of Greenlane Road and Manukau Road, where the liquor store is now.

The AGM of 24 June 1944 decided to hold a postal ballot on the issue of Sunday play. It was lost by 27 to 83 against. A year later the AGM had to consider the club's financial position, the number of players, the number of rinks and the likely load factor. The club agreed to increase playing member numbers from 180 to 200 (we had a large waiting list) and increase the annual sub to £5 with a 10/- rebate.

Opening days were always an opportunity for the local MP to pontificate; sometimes he would attend two or three openings on one day. On one occasion Kiri Te Kanawa sang there as an 18-year-old.

A history was produced for the Golden Jubilee in 1956, and I would like to quote one paragraph.

> The progress of this Club over 50 years shows that the enthusiasm of our progenitors was most definitely justified and those same cheers reinforced by our Golden Jubilee today will echo on to the centenary and further.

Membership of sporting clubs everywhere is a problem for so many different reasons. When membership dropped to under 200 men only thirty years ago, there was great concern. Now as a 'mixed' club we are probably under 100. However with foresight our directors, with the support of the members, have made the drastic changes you can see today. Greens that can be used 365 days of the year under conditions which would have wiped out play in the past.

However it is to be regretted that a lack of forethought in 1920 and again in 1954 saw the club miss the opportunity to buy land which would have given access to Merivale Avenue and provided better parking.

I cannot conclude this précis of the club's early history without paying tribute to my neighbour for 50 years — the late Johnny Killeen. When John returned from WW2 he asked Dad if he could use our telephone occasionally to get his signwriting business established. (In those days, as for cars, you had to put your name on the waiting list for a phone.) To help John, Dad asked him to design our honours board. This he did, and he and his partner Neil updated it annually — and the club never received an invoice for his time. Later, by now a keen bowler himself, he was offered free membership — an offer which was appreciated but ignored. His son Richard, aka Ricky Killeen, is now a world famous contemporary artist.

My personal association with the Epsom Bowling Club spans 80 years, but I still admit when I quietly stand in the upstairs hall and gaze at the surrounds, I can't help but reflect on the club's proud history and fond memories. I look on the faces of past presidents — including my Dad's — and still read the impressive honours board with the names of friends and forbears who have successfully steered the club through 104 years. And through its windows I see One Tree Hill, Mt Eden, St Andrews Church, beautiful old green trees, and try to visualize the area as it was in 1906 with paddocks, tracks and gas lights if lucky. How quiet it must have been then. Maybe this will help you to make a decision to play bowls, to enjoy the fraternity of fellowship.

Here are two true sayings:

"Bowling can add years to your life and life to your years."

"You don't stop bowling because you grow old;
you grow old because you stop bowling."

Charles and Ann Barriball and family
— *from Cornwall to Mt Eden* —

By Margaret Barriball

My great-grandparents Charles and Ann Barriball, with their three eldest children John, Samuel and Sophia, sailed from Plymouth England on the *Duke of Westminster* on 4 December 1842, and arrived in Auckland off Tiritiri Matangi Island on 31 March 1843. They landed in Auckland the next day, 1 April, after a passage of 128 days!

In her history of the Barriball Family, *From Werrington to Waiuku*, Joanne Robinson tells us that Charles's brother Henry had emigrated 13 months previously to New Plymouth. We don't know why Charles and Ann decided on Auckland rather than New Plymouth, but it may be that the young town of Auckland presented better opportunities, or just that the ship which was available happened to be going to Auckland rather than New Plymouth! But Auckland was in the middle of a depression, and all the passengers from the *Westminster* evidently had difficulty finding work. Charles, however, did find work as a labourer during that first year before moving up towards the top of Symonds Street, where he was engaged in agricultural work. By 1845 they had moved yet again to land bounded by Mt Eden and Balmoral roads and what later became Windmill Road.

Here Charles leased some land from Methodist minister the Reverend Walter Lawry, probably a 20 acre allotment, and they called the property 'Eden Grove'. Their fourth child, Charles Thomas, was born there in 1845, as were the remaining five children, including my grandfather Joseph in 1854. The last child, Alfred Martyn, was born in 1856, completing the family of nine.

Charles and Ann considered themselves very fortunate to have come to New Zealand, and in a letter to her brother Tristram, Ann wrote glowingly saying she had 'plenty of everything she could wish for'. By this time they were able to employ two male workers and a maid, although it does sound as though the servants were not always entirely reliable! Food was plentiful, and they had their own cows, pigs, ducks, chickens and turkeys, as well as horses for transport.

Charles and Ann had been staunch Wesleyans in England, and they soon found fellow Devon and Cornish folk who wished to worship here.

Delia Bridget Barriball, née Fewry, 1836–1903

Initially, they would probably have attended the first small Methodist church in Auckland which had been established in High Street. When he had arrived in 1844, the Reverend Walter Lawry became the Superintendant of Wesleyan Missions and the minister of this church, and so, as Charles and Ann's landlord as well, he was to have a big influence on their early life in New Zealand.

In June 1847, a Methodist Class Meeting was started in Epsom under the leadership of Thomas Somerville, and shortly afterwards a small church was built for this little congregation, located where the properties at numbers 29 and 31 Alba Road are now.

In her history of the Epsom Chapel, Helen Laurenson tells us that in June 1857 'Bro' Barriball assumed leadership of a small group of Wesleyans. It is not certain whether this was, in fact, my great-grandfather Charles or his eldest son John, my great uncle, who would have been nearly twenty-one by then. John was married to Delia Bridget Fewry in July 1856, just four months after the birth of Charles and Ann's youngest child, but the marriage took place at 'Eden Grove' rather than at the little chapel, because the bride was a Roman Catholic. It is thought, however, that the younger members of the Barriball family, including my grandfather Joseph, may have been baptised in the chapel, but we don't have any record of this.

By 1860 the Barriball family were no longer involved in the Epsom Chapel, but were supporting the Wesleyan cause at Waiuku where they had been given a grant of land on which to farm. Charles at last had the opportunity to own his own land, something which most of his relatives in Devon and Cornwall had never been able to do. The entire possessions of the family were transported by scows, similar to the *Jane Gifford*, from Onehunga to Waiuku. They called their new farm at Pukeoware 'Eden Hill' after their previous place of residence in Mt Eden.

On the outskirts of Waiuku there is a 'Barriball Road', and many descendants of Charles and Ann still live in the district. I am now privileged to live in Epsom, close to where my great-grandparents lived and worked over 150 years ago.

Sources

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John Barriball, 1836–1922

Three Kings Grove
— a site study —

By C. E. Keith Fuller

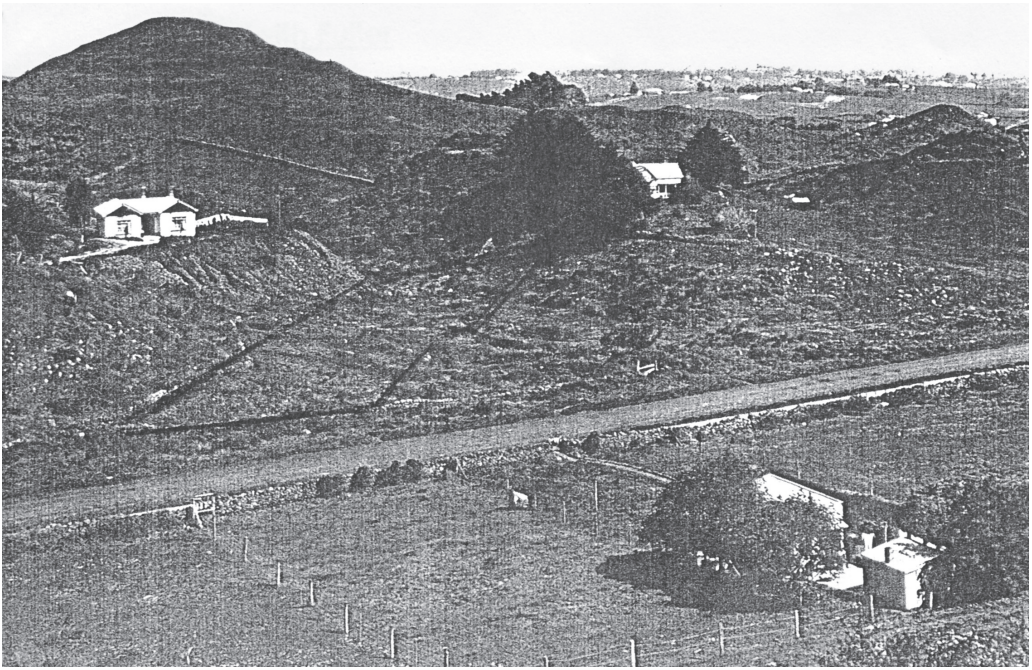
The Mt Roskill chronicle by Jade Reidy (2007), *Not Just Passing Through — The Making of Mount Roskill*, contains this assertion on page 132: 'The first landfill in Mt Roskill was sited in Duke Street in a large volcanic blowhole.' As writer of this article I have doubts that this assertion is correct! Where in Duke Street is this landfill to be found? I am also open to contradiction.

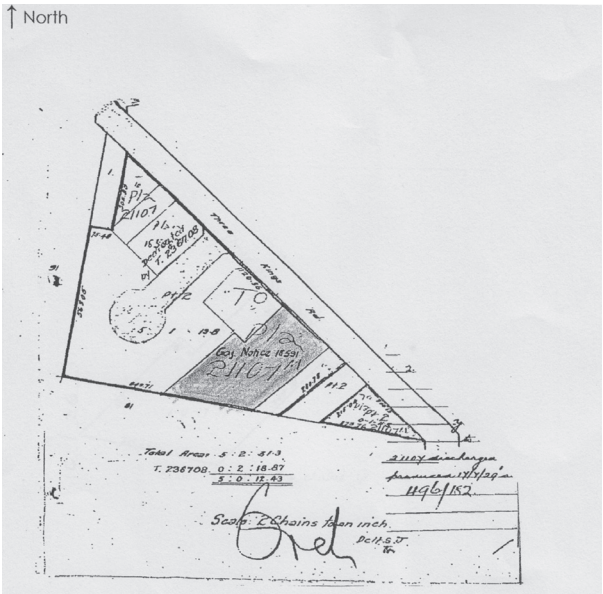
My understanding is that the first 'Roskill' landfill (public rubbish dump) was sited in Three Kings Road (now Mt Eden Road), the precise location being 947 Mt Eden Road. It was on this area of land that the Mt Roskill Borough Council in the 1960s built a 25-unit pensioner housing facility. This public tip site was initially for household waste. Industrial waste followed. Precise dates have not been found but it seems that the tip operated from the 1930s to the late 1940s, when the Mt Roskill Borough Council (1947–89) closed it and covered it over. The site lay desolate until the 1960s.

The historic background of this piece of land is worthy of record before it too, as has happened with one of the cones of the Three Kings volcanic complex, becomes the inheritor of unreliable historic hearsay.

In the October of 1922, brothers George (Jnr) and W. Percy Winstone jointly purchased two adjoining one hectare portions of Allotments 79 & 80 from Messrs G.A. Shaw and P.R. Kinloch. They amalgamated the two titles. A subdivision plan for a closed street (cul-de-sac) of some 2ha was lodged with the Land Transfer Office, Auckland (1923).

Approval for the subdivision was granted in 1925. In 1929 the cul-de-sac was dedicated as Roskill Way. Of the total land area involved, 0.4ha was taken for a recreation reserve and vested in the name of the Crown (1927) — ie held in trust. The *Gazette* of 1930 recorded the conveyance of this piece of land as follows — 'as a site to form part of the Mt Roskill Domain'. In reality, this piece of land was low lying, and basin-like in contour (see photograph). A decision to use this site as a municipal rubbish tip presumably was made by the elected members of the then Mt Roskill Road Board (1883–1947). No date is known but by guesstimate the early 1930s.

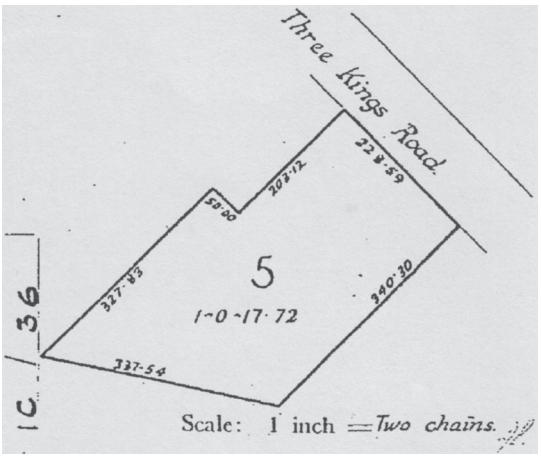




Above:
Kinloch–McQuoid house, 1920

Left:
A 1925 drawing showing the planned Winstone Bros subdivision. The recreation reserve is notated 21107.

Come 1961 the now Mt Roskill Borough Council was able to have the reserve status of the site revoked. The altered Certificate of Title (1963) allowed them to now use the area 'for the construction thereon of 25 brick and tile pensioner flats'. The place was eventually named Three Kings Grove. With time the units became unstable as the 'tip refuse' continued to consolidate. With council amalgamation (1989) these pensioner flats became the property of the Auckland City Council, who demolished the units in 2000, replacing them over the next two years with 'for senior citizens', a $2.2 million housing project which was described as '25 spacious rental units ergonomically designed to create a community setting'. Auckland City Council has now on-sold the property to Housing New Zealand.



May 1963; the site is registered for pensioner flats (metric area 4496sqm)

In conclusion, the question that has to be asked is — why did the then councillors of the Mt Roskill Borough Council allow housing to be built on this clearly indisputably unstable (rubbish infilled) piece of land?

Practical wisdom was seemingly overlooked! What of the present units?

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Classroom chronicles 1928–1963

By Olive Stubbs/Clarke

A continuation of 'Teacher Training in the 1920s' published in *Prospect* Vol 8, 2007

I was very lucky with my first break from a very sheltered home. To do my 'country service' in 1928 I was posted to Dargaville. My first headmaster, Mr Stevenson, had a daughter who was a dental nurse in my new area. He wrote to her and asked her to do what she could for me. Consequently I was met by her and a member of the school committee and taken to a boarding house where I was to share a room with another teacher. My new school was a large one with a roll of about 500, so I was very fortunate in that I was not thrown on my own resources.

The headmaster and staff made me very welcome, and the whole time I was in that school I met with no unpleasantness of any kind. I had a Standard Three class of 65 pupils. Such numbers would appal teachers of today, but we coped and I think I can say coped successfully. There were several Maori children in my group and I found them a great asset. I loved teaching singing, but unlike the other members of staff I did not use the piano. I used my good old tuning fork and my own voice. I found that the piano only served to cover up many false notes and I could get truer singing without it. Here again my Maoris were invaluable for they could harmonise naturally, and our singing lessons were our relaxation. Often too, when books were being collected prior to being marked, we'd sing as we did so and thoroughly enjoy ourselves.

Nature Study too provided great interest. We collected specimens of all the insects we could find and studied them in great detail. I used to chloroform one of each and mount it in a small cardboard box which I tacked on the wall to make a frieze. I had a horrible experience with one of these. The carpenters were in the building at the time and one of them presented me with the largest centipede I had ever seen. I duly set it up in my usual way, but the next morning I found I had underestimated the dose of chloroform it required to kill the poor creature and it had returned to life. I felt most perturbed about causing it such horrible suffering. I killed it at once and our collection never again had a centipede in it. I simply could not look at one without feeling guilty.

We also caught tadpoles which we nursed through to the frog stage. When they became too active, we placed wire netting over the top to keep them from wandering. The end came though when three escaped and hopped into the head's study. After that they were taken to the nearest pond where we left them to their own devices.

Another subject we revelled in was elocution. I had been taught myself and had won a scholarship entitling me to a year's free tuition so I knew a bit about the subject. By judicious choice of poems and heaps of enthusiasm, our results were quite amazing. The children loved reciting, and poor readers found great encouragement when they found they could outdo better readers in this allied subject.

As you can imagine, life was very busy. I believe in marking all written work myself and this was a major task but it was the only way I could get a true assessment of each child's progress and so provide the assistance each child required. I insisted on neatness and stressed the fact that writing was not just an isolated lesson but was one to be practised in all written work. I was careful too to see that my marking was neat and did not disfigure any of the work handed in.

So we progressed, and then came the inspectors. They generally worked in pairs and some were more critical than others. I struck Mr Plummer who had a reputation for being hard to please. He collected all my exercise books and examined every one from the first page to the last. He called for drawing books and did the same. Each child had to read aloud and then he asked me to get every seventh child to recite a poem. After this, there came a written spelling test, an arithmetic test and a composition. This occupied two days, and the wear and tear on our nerves was tremendous. Occasionally he would discuss a point or two with me, mainly as a test of class discipline to see how children behaved without direct supervision. Fortunately our answer to spare minutes was to silent read so we passed favourably.

When he had seen all there was to be seen, he conferred with the headmaster and wrote his report which was sent to the Education Board where it was filed and a copy returned to us with the coveted mark of our new grading.

We had one inspector whose fetish was cleanliness. He would run his finger along the blackboard ledge and if he found too much chalk dust, would mutter, 'Filth.' I ask you. How can you use chalk without leaving chalk dust? One poor soul had scathing remarks passed about a football

mark on the ceiling. That mark had been there long before the teacher took over and it was so high up that it would need an extension ladder to reach it. He came into my room to inspect (not me) but a pupil teacher and he told the headmaster that I was evidently an efficient teacher. When I asked how he could make such a statement when he hadn't seen me teach, I was told that he had walked carefully backward down the rows and been able to see under the children's desks. The neatness impressed him. What he didn't know was that I had made every child tidy up so that the pupil-teacher's lesson would not be disturbed by any books falling on the floor. He was also taken by surprise when he tested their comprehension. He wanted to know the meaning of the word 'parasite'. When the common terms were exhausted, one child volunteered the fact that a child was a parasite too and he wasn't quite sure what to say to that. That reminds me also of the minister who had a similar surprise. We had Bible Study once a week and when he asked the meaning of the word 'heathen', he was told it was a Roman Catholic.

At the end of this year, we all returned to our homes for the holidays. When we returned to Dargaville, the infant mistress, my room mate from the high school and I decided to rent a house and fend for ourselves. This we did. In the meantime as the Depression had become a nightmare, we had all suffered a 10 per cent cut in our salaries, so we had to economise — not that we had ever had a chance to be extravagant.

Anyway we rented a villa for which we paid £1 a week. We had a room each which we furnished ourselves and then clubbed together to furnish the lounge and the kitchen. For my bedroom I bought a stretcher, a mattress, a pillow, bedclothes and a mirror. The rest of the furniture was made up out of apple cases. Three laid on top of one another provided the necessary 'drawers'. Two stood on end each side of these and provided storage for shoes, cosmetics, etc. I covered these with chintz, built a smaller unit of similar materials and made a small chair. All in all, the effect was very satisfying and I was quite proud of my room. As it had a fireplace with alcoves on each side, these provided me with wardrobes draped with matching chintz. Floor coverings were too expensive to buy, so all flooring was painted a light grey and a few cheap rugs helped take away the bare look.

The lounge and kitchen were a community project, and provided us with the bare essentials. As the other two girls lived in the district

although too far away for daily travel, we sometimes gained extra odds and ends. In fact after a few months occupancy, Elva had her piano sent down. We took turns with the housekeeping. Our bedrooms were our own responsibility, as was our personal washing. Cooking was done for a week by each in turn, but the cook always escaped the washing up and general housework. We lived very happily in this way and our visitors were many and varied. They were always welcome and enjoyed themselves, even though our suppers consisted mainly of tea and toast cooked over a fire.

A few months later I became engaged to Reay, my dentist's son, and as he had gained a job in Auckland as a professional photographer, I began to scan each *Education Gazette* to see if I could find a position advertised in the Auckland area. As I said before, city jobs were hard to gain and I had to wait about twelve months before I was finally appointed to Meadowbank School in Remuera. Just prior to my appointment I had gained two new pupils, daughters of our Prime Minister Bill Massey. My class was their first experience with a state school, as they had always had a governess and their three elder sisters were all at a private school, Solway I believe. They were very natural, unrestrained children, used to completely individual treatment and they and I had quite a bit of adjusting to do. I still use the leather compendium they gave me as a farewell present.

It was while I was in Dargaville that I owned — or part-owned — my first car. Kath Wallace, who shared our house, suggested that we should buy a car between us. Elva Downs, our other house mate, was not really interested, so Kath and I bought one between us. It was a baby Austin saloon and cost us £180. As neither of us had ever driven before, we had to take lessons — no driving school in those days. The local mechanic, Reilly Jesperson, gave us three hours apiece and then pronounced us ready to go for our licences. This we did, and believe it or not we had no trouble in procuring same. I had to stop on hills, reverse, park and negotiate a flock of sheep. This last was such a large one that I eventually stopped and waited for it to pass as I was dead scared of hitting one. This apparently was the correct procedure so I became a *driver*. That poor little car. What a life it had.

Kath was a clever person, very abrupt and jerky in her movements and thoroughly unpredictable. One day she actually parked the car on the railway lines while she visited a clinic nearby. These lines crossed

the main road — no lights, no bells. While it was so situated, the Kaihu Express made its one and only daily trip. The engine driver, seeing the car, slowed down sufficiently to toss it lightly off the track. It was dented a little but drivable. Kath had to appear in court charged with negligence. She was fined £20 and Dargaville laughed for weeks.

Another time, she missed seeing a road barrier until she slid under it and it hit the windscreen. Once she collided with a cow which was crossing the road.

The most frequent problems it gave us were punctures. On one occasion, three of us went out to Bayleys Beach and got a puncture. I have never forgotten my horror that our male passenger — Kath's brother Keith — sat on the bank and watched us change the wheel!

When I returned to Auckland, my mother joined me as she was now alone. My sister Ivy was in Rhodesia and Evelyn had married and was living in Waitetuna. We rented a house near my new school and off I went. This school was run on entirely different lines from any other school in my experience. The headmaster had very definite ideas which he insisted should be adopted by all his staff. All exercise books for each subject were to be set out according to his directions. For instance when spelling was to be taken, he came into my room and took a model lesson which I was to imitate. The next day, I was subjected to his scrutiny to find out if his instructions had been understood. The ruling under the heading and the ending were to be double lines but the line under 10 was to be single. The first 10 words were words set out for homework the day before and the last four words were revisional words that had caused some difficulty previously. The teaching of the words too had to be done systematically and all types of memory exercised. Firstly the word was written on the blackboard. The children looked at it, said it, spelt it again with eyes closed, wrote it in the air and in their books. Before passing to the next word, it was used in a sentence so that comprehension was taken into account.

Arithmetic books, English books and composition work were all subject to the same detailed method of setting out. Each month, all books were collected and sent to the office for his appraisal. I remember sending in 60 extremely neat spelling books which were returned with two comments.

1) Please note in so-and-so's book, one "i" undotted.

2) Please note so-and-so ruled off with a single line instead of the double.

I nearly had a disaster when it came to composition. The usual model lesson was given and the children wrote him his essay. I had noted that compositions done by other classes were written in paragraphs with the paragraph heading underlined. In his composition he omitted the underlined paragraph heading and when I queried this, I was told to proceed as shown. This I did but when my books were handed in for their monthly check I was sharply criticised for not adhering to his example. This was just too much to swallow, so I ventured to argue, produced his model which was dated, and to my surprise and relief he apologised.

In spite of all these teaching restrictions, I must admit that the standard of work was really excellent. When a child moved from one class to the next the work proceeded very smoothly as no time was wasted in adjusting to new methods. One just carried on. As far as the staff were concerned, this stifling of individuality in teaching was most frustrating and caused quite a lot of tension, as it was quite impossible to relax at any time.

It was at about this time that disaster really struck. The Depression had deepened. Many people had lost their jobs and consequently quite often their homes too. When mortgages fell due, there was little chance of renewal. Second mortgages became losses and people's savings were used in the struggle to survive. Many professional men found themselves forced to work on road works, and life was grim. My father and my fiancé were both badly hit so we pooled all our resources and bought a small farm at Taupaki.

I was the only wage earner but had to board in town until, quite providentially, a vacancy occurred at the Taupaki School. This was a piece of good fortune in a way, for the farm was proving a vain hope and it was quite obvious that it could never sustain two families, so what money I could spare was very welcome. My life at that school was far from happy. The head was a woman and a married woman at that. Married women holding jobs were most unpopular and were dismissed unless dire circumstances could be proved.

This poor woman was most unpopular. The people wanted a man teacher and the Education Board did too but her husband was an invalid and thus she held her job. The school was an unhappy one as she was caught between two stools and could please no-one. The atmosphere was most unfortunate and her handling of the children did not help.

She was very efficient indeed but would take no risks to give offence. If she had to punish a child, I was called in as a witness to what was said and done.

In summer, all the girls (infants and standards) played rounders and in winter it was basketball. The boys played cricket in summer and football in winter. As she went to the school house for lunch, playground supervision fell on my shoulders as it was only a two-teacher school. The poor children never had a decent game as the age gaps were too great. I used to gather a team of the oldest children after school and do a bit of coaching.

Such a lot of minor irritations occurred too. Once a child offered me a peanut and of course I said thank you and took one, even though peanuts are not favourites of mine. Mrs Metherill told me I was taking a risk as the parents might not like my taking anything from a child. How could I humiliate a child by refusing? Another time a child reported that the girl sitting beside her had measles. I of course sent for the child and investigated. I felt for the usual swollen glands, saw the rash and sent the child home with an explanatory note. I was told never to touch a child like that again as I might be accused of indecency!

My nerves by this time were getting very frayed in more ways then one. I had been engaged for five years and the prospect of getting married was as far away as ever. I made an appointment with the secretary of the Education Board and put my case to him. I explained that I loved teaching and that I also wanted to marry. I knew that married women teachers were having to resign to make way for men, but in my case, if permission was not granted, then I could not marry and so would create no vacancy. He was most sympathetic and told me that he would discuss my situation at the next board meeting, and let me know the result. Two weeks later, I was called for an interview and told that in view of my good record, the board was making an exception and wished me luck.

You can imagine my feelings! This was Saturday and things had to move smartly. A marriage licence had to be procured, a minister had to be interviewed and a frock bought. All this in three days for I was married on the next Wednesday (25 January 1933), spent my wedding night in a hotel in Queen Street, and then had three days' honeymoon on my sister's farm at Raglan. The following Monday I was back in school teaching as usual, but under a new name.

On being appointed to Maungawhau the first thing to do, of course, was to find a suitable flat, convenient for both of us. This we finally did at 2 Rautangi Road, Mt Eden, and as it was within walking distance of the school I could avoid paying tram fares.

My first class was Standard Three, 58 children all told. The atmosphere of the school was a good one. The children and parents worked well with us and disciplinary problems were few. As married women were eyed askance for holding down a job during these days of unemployment, I became rather retiring. I never mentioned my home condition and took little part in staffroom conversations as I was very sensitive and did not want to risk being snubbed. It was not until three years later that I was told my fellow teachers thought I was a widow.

This first class of mine presented me with many interesting problems, and as the relationship between the children and myself was a good one I was able to spend time and thought on them. One boy stammered very badly and because of this was very reluctant to join in any oral work. He was an intelligent child so I probed into his past history to see what I could unearth. Somewhere along the line his fellow pupils had been allowed to laugh at his attempts and this made matters worse. Gradually I got them to realise they had to help, not hinder, and this they did to a limited extent. As I mentioned earlier, one of my favourite subjects was elocution. Recitation was its name on the timetable and an hour a week was allotted to its teaching — four 15-minute periods. I chose poems that appealed to the particular age group and the children loved reciting — so did my problem child, and his efforts were quite amazing.

As usual when I was puzzled about any child's reactions, I contacted (generally) the mother, and asked her to come and meet me. This she did and I learned more of his back history. Apparently she was taking him to a specialist who told her that he should never be asked to read aloud by himself but should always have someone to read with him. I thought this was soul destroying for him and his helper so I thought quickly and said,

'Have you ever heard him recite?'

'Oh no,' she said, 'we would never expect him to do that.'

When I asked the child to do so, she was amazed and rushed him off to the specialist before what she said was a 'miracle' wore off. To cut a long story short, that was the answer. Once he found he was capable of

reciting so well, his confidence grew and his stammer disappeared. It was a thrill for all of us, for we all shared the credit.

Recitation no longer appears on timetables, and our five-minute speech training period has also disappeared, why I do no know. Most, and I say most not all, children enjoyed reciting for it gave them plenty of scope to express themselves, and our speech training exercises certainly helped their diction and this was reflected in a better standard of spelling than is produced today. (Note: this comment is based on personal experience with three grandsons living with me and attending the same school, 1973–83.)

In 1939 I became pregnant and told the headmaster I was going to resign. Instead he persuaded me to apply for maternity leave — a very good decision as it proved, for with the outbreak of war there was a shortage of men in the schools and the once despised 'married woman' became a very desirable teacher. However, even with my mother looking after Jeanette during the school day, travelling from Mt Albert — on the trams — made it a very long day, and when a job was advertised at Owairaka, much closer to home, I took it. At the beginning of 1944, two major changes occurred. Our second daughter — Barbie — was born ten days after we moved to Mt Eden Road, and the classroom did not see me for the next nine years.

Then a friend teaching at Maungawhau fell ill and asked me to look after her class while she was on sick leave. I eventually went back for a month to try it out. I was now within easy walking distance of the school and as I taught in the same room with the same head as when I resigned, the years rolled back and I was where I belonged. I loved it. The inspectors came while I was in charge and Mr Burnett gave me a glowing report and suggested I should return to teaching on a permanent basis. I considered this, and as it would not cause any disruption to the girls I decided to do so. The only snag was that at the beginning I should have to teach a primer class, work I was not fond of. It was only for a term though, and the next year saw me installed in a prefab with a composite class of Standards One and Two. Lovely.

Standards had changed while I was away, and I found the trend was to underestimate children's ability. The emphasis too was on group work, the latest fad. This amused me for we had always taught by the group method, the only difference being in the fact that our groups changed daily as the need suggested itself. With the new idea, groups

seemed to me to be a matter of seating. Children in a group sat around a table and worked together, with a leader apportioning the work load. This made for unnecessary noise and gave endless opportunities for the lazy to laze and the conscientious to carry their burdens. The older way of dealing with groups meant constant change. For example, if one were teaching multiplication, some children grasped the principle immediately, whereupon one extended their work and let them forge ahead, while the slower ones had further individual attention. When division was taught, the situation altered. Some of those who found multiplication easy found difficulties with division and so on. So it was too with all subjects — eradicating weaknesses in some and extending strengths in others, hence changing groups.

The staff at Maungawhau at this time formed two groups: the primer teachers and the standard teachers. We taught in separate buildings and had morning tea and lunch in our separate common rooms, so we did not often mix as a single unit and met mainly at school meetings or on special occasions. Marion Branson and I were the only two women teachers on the standard staff. The headmaster Mr Woods, who suffered from chronic asthma, retired soon after I arrived and his place was filled by Norman Oram. He was a thoroughly nice man, popular with his staff, the children and the parents. Working in his school was a pleasure, for he was appreciative of all your efforts and there was no feeling of tension. The first assistant was Doug Arneil, a crusty old bachelor with a deep drawl and a 'presence' which inspired good behaviour among the pupils.

My first years were spent in the school's only 'prefab' on one of the front lawns. I was very sorry when my prefab was removed and I was allotted a room in the main building. No permanent spouting was allowed on prefabs, and during wet weather the rain used to pour off the roof and we had great puddles to negotiate. One of these became known as 'Mrs Clarke's puddle' because twice I was caught fishing in it for some money a child had dropped. Funny the little things that make for good memories.

My new room was near the entrance and quite near the head's study, very convenient for Mr Oram, who popped in quite often whenever he wanted to escape his telephone or borrow a messenger. Here, too, many amusing things happened. In the summer we took our daily trip to the baths where we did our best to supervise and teach 50-odd

youngsters to swim. Not an easy job. With good reason, I divided the pool into three sections; one for non-swimmers, one for those who could manage 25 yards and one for strong swimmers. On one occasion Graeme Piggott, son of the people who owned the bookshop at the top of the hill, wanted to swim the length of the pool to qualify for a certificate. I usually had a long bamboo pole handy so that if a child was in any difficulty I could offer the pole and draw the child to the rail at the side. This time, my pole was missing. Anyway, I started him at the deep end so that if he tired he would be able to reach the bottom. This was not to be. He tired early and when he tried to stand the water was too deep and the bottom slippery. I could see that he was going to panic and that of course I could not allow to happen as it would upset his confidence and that of the class watching. Without thinking, I stepped in, shoes and all, and dragged him out. I was in no danger of course but I was horribly wet as I had to swim the last few yards. I plonked him on the side and then I saw the funny side of things and laughed. This eased the tension, for the children were shocked and worried about my condition and my reaction. Mr Oram was too when I reported to the office for permission to go home and change. That afternoon, Mrs Piggott rang to apologise for the trouble her son had caused, but she had a sense of humour too and we both enjoyed the joke — on me.

Another incident in that same class put my reputation in jeopardy. I believed and still believe in discipline, but I do not believe that means bullying. I avoided the use of the strap and tried all other means to dodge confrontation, which is usually fatal. It means you lose the respect of the child and to a certain extent your own too. This time I felt I had no choice. One spoilt little madam dug her sharp pencil into her deskmate's arm and broke off the lead which was quite deeply embedded in the flesh. This was too much so I used my strap. The children were appalled and the news flew around the school. 'Did you really strap someone?' I was asked by numerous children in the playground. The last straw came at the end of the day when I went into the dairy to collect my bread, for the owner, Mrs Crisp, said, 'I believe you strapped someone today.' My halo was cracked, but somehow or other, everyone seemed to be on my side. So much for that.

Before I returned to teaching, I had resigned and collected 23 years of superannuation subscriptions which came to the mighty sum of £235. Women teachers in my day had to retire on half pay after 30

years of service or at 55 years of age, and men worked 40 years or till 65 years and retired on two-thirds pay. By then I had taught 23 years and had only seven years to go to qualify for superannuation. Could I buy those years back? I approached the Education Board and found I *could* — but it took eleven long months for them to finalise things and set me a figure for repayment. To buy back £235 was going to cost close on £1000 and this I could ill afford, but Reay and I emptied our bank accounts and I was *in*; the best investment we ever made. Not long afterwards Mrs Simpson, a minister's wife who taught in the primer block, approached me and said she had heard that I had bought back my superannuation and wanted to do likewise. She found however, that she was two months too late as the policy had changed, so I was lucky.

In 1963 Maungawhau School celebrated its Golden Jubilee, and great preparations were made for its success. I was due to retire in 1962 as I had reached the age limit, but the Education Board kindly extended my service for another year because of my long association with the school. In 50 years, Maungawhau had only had four headmasters: Mr Olsen, Mr Wilson, Mr Woods and Mr Oram and I had taught under all of them! First as a student with Mr Olsen, then seven years as an assistant under Mr Wilson, a break and then three years under Mr Woods followed by eleven years with Mr Oram — a total of 21 years out of a teaching life.

This meant that I was really involved, for I was part of the past and also a member of the present staff. Of all the people at the jubilee, I had the closest relationship with the school, and past and present pupils made me feel that my teaching years had been worthwhile.

Henry Woods of Mt Eden

By Bob Kinnear

Henry Woods, the third son of Peter and Catherine, was born 12 January 1871 in St Helens, Lancashire, England. He died in Auckland, 23 April 1942.

With only a primary school education he went to work at one of the St Helens glass factories, London & Manchester Plate Glass Co Ltd, which was later part of Pilkington Brothers.

The glass manufacturing business was going through a period of change, and more sophisticated methods were being introduced which not only improved the quality of the product but also reduced the cost. Less expensive Continental plate glass was coming into England, causing a down-scaling in Pilkington's production in Lancashire. At the time the Australian colonies were eager to attract workers, and offered subsidised passages. Henry left the glass works in June 1891 at the age of twenty. His employment reference from the company read: 'This is to certify that Henry Woods has worked for this company since he was a lad: that his behaviour has always been good, and that he is leaving us, after giving his usual notice, with the intention of emigrating to Australia.'

On 23 June 1891 he sailed from Blackwall, London, in the ship *Jelunga*, bound for Rockhampton, Queensland. The price of the ticket was £1 for the steerage class passage. Eating utensils and bedding to be provided by the passengers! The voyage would have taken about three months and was a real test of endurance under the circumstances. The wording on the ticket was:

> I engage that the person named in the margin hereof shall be provided with a steerage passage to, and shall be landed at, the port of Rockhampton in Queensland, in the ship *Jelunga* with not less than ten cubic feet for luggage for each statute adult, and shall be victualled during the voyage and at the time of detention at any place before its termination, according to the subjoined scale, for the sum of one pound, including Government dues before embarkation, and Head Money, if any, at the place of landing, and every other charge, except freight for excess of luggage beyond the quantity specified.

After settling in Rockhampton Harry worked on the new rail system, apparently as a ticket collector, and during this time he became friends with the Merson family (from Devon) who were horse traders and gunsmiths. On 5 June 1895 he married Sarah Merson at her family home in Joseph Street. Sarah was one of twelve Merson children who were all very musical, Sarah being a piano teacher.

Around 1900 Henry and Sarah and their first three children all decided, probably because of hard economic times in Queensland, to move to Auckland. They, together with the Mersons, settled in the

Woods grocery store, c.1906
Photo suppplied by Bob Kinnear

Mt Eden area around Edwin and Mary streets. The Mersons (together with the Armitage family) set up a horse transport business in the city, and a gunsmith business in upper Symonds Street. Henry bought a small shop on the corner of Mt Eden and Esplanade roads. This was a grocery and general store. Within a few months he set about to enlarge the building and add living accommodation upstairs. Out the back was room for a horse and trap, and later, an early motorbike and sidecar, then a Metz motor car.

With the arrival of three more children the Woods family moved to a larger two-storey house across at 3 Esplanade Road, next door to a Winstone family residence. Electric power had not yet been reticulated to residential areas of Auckland, and streets were lit by gas. Henry, despite his lack of early schooling, was a great reader and spent the evenings beside a gas or kerosene lamp. Sarah continued with the piano, and all her children, together with the Mersons, enjoyed great family musical evenings. Around 1922 Henry purchased an acre of land on the beach-front at Orewa and built one of the first holiday baches there, which was used and enjoyed by the extended family for over 40 years.

Henry Woods joined the Auckland Master Grocers' Association after the First World War, and was later chairman of the New Zealand Master Grocers' Association. In October 1922 eight members of the Auckland Association formed a buying group. There were many difficulties in the early days, from lack of storage space to poor recognition from manufacturers. It was reported in August 1924 that Mr J. Heaton Barker had negotiated a big deal with the Auckland Meat Company for 1000 hams at 11 pence per pound, less 7.5 per cent. From 1 April 1925 the group began trading as 'Foodstuffs Ltd' (4 Square), with Henry as its first chairman.

The grocery shop on the corner of Esplanade Road continued with Henry's twin sons Eddie and George taking over the business in the late 1930s. A lot of the time in those days was spent ordering, sorting and weighing the produce to be placed on the shelves behind the counter. There was no self service and each customer was served by the grocer as an individual, and often their purchases delivered to their homes by a boy on a bike after school. Eddie followed in his father's footsteps in the 1950s, and also became chairman of Foodstuffs for a period.

The historic shop on Mt Eden Road is still a grocery business to this day.

A local dairy

By Betty Barnes

Early pupils of Epsom Primary School will remember the little dairy in the hollow of The Drive just before King George Avenue. It opened directly off the footpath and consisted of the front shop area and two small rooms behind. It had previously been a cobbler's shop and had been empty for some time when my father saw its possibility as a dairy. This was to give employment to my sister. She had previously been employed by Masco's in Karangahape Road, but after six months when she was due for a rise of 1/3d (13.25 cents) per week she was sacked so that they could employ someone else at the lower rate. This was not uncommon in the Depression years, and occurred in 1934.

Later my mother took over the shop, which had her name — 'A Stacey' — on the window until she finally gave it up in the early 1950s. Our home was a mile away in Buckland (now Buckley) Road and she would walk this daily before getting her driver's licence in her 50s and buying a little Austin Seven car.

Initially it was a primitive little shop with no electricity. The only illumination came from a gas lamp in the shop window, and I well remember going to the gas company in Wyndham Street to buy replacement gas mantles for that little gas lamp.

Before electricity we had an ice chest for our cold goods. The upper space housed a large block of ice (delivered weekly by the 'iceman' from Walkers Ice) where we used to keep the bottles of cream. The cupboard below held the serving can of milk from which we would ladle the milk with a dipper. We always added a little more for good measure.

Between the school and King George Avenue were two villa houses, our shop, two more houses (one behind the shop) and a grocer's shop on the corner. The house next door to the school had stables out the back where visiting drivers would stable their trotting horses and live in while competing at Alexandra Park. These now all form part of the school grounds.

Dad's cars

By Jack Baker

Dad's cars were a significant part of my childhood. The oldest car I can remember Dad owning in 1929–30 was a Citroen — confirmed by a couple of old photos I have. It appears to be a collection of iron supports and running boards and canvas.

Young Jack on the running board of his father's Citroen

I have a better memory of his next vehicle, a Pontiac, probably in 1932. It was a very elegant car — blinds with a tassle for the rear and back windows, a finely etched silver head of an Indian chief on the front of the bonnet, and a little sign attached on the side saying 'BODY BY FISHER'.

Came streamlining and Dad moved to a Vauxhall 14. Believe me, in those years (about 1934–5) car firms allowed prospective buyers to take a vehicle home for the night — or even the weekend — 'to try it out'. I still remember our excitement when Dad arrived home on Friday evening with our shiny sparkling 'sample' car for the weekend.

Dad (Frank) and Jack beside Dad's pride and joy, our Pontiac, c.1929

We had a couple of those Vauxhall 14s before the onset of WW2 in 1939. Then followed four or five years of petrol rationing, and import controls on new cars. For a new car, the motor firm would put your name on a list and of course all sorts of graft went on. I even think Dad made some 'arrangement' as manager of Farmers' Shipping Customs Department — for just at the war's end (I was still overseas) my sister arrived home to find a brand new green Hillman Minx. He had two or three Hillmans later — all English-assembled as opposed to NZ-assembled. He arranged the transfer of funds through the Farmers' buying agents in London — Tytherleigh & Co — and had the car freighted direct to him. In fact when on leave in London a couple of times in 1945, I ran out of money and was allowed to visit Tytherleighs twice for a loan of about two or three pounds fixed up by Dad later by some means. Hillmans remained Dad's car of choice till he passed away in 1967. His last car was a shocker to drive but of course Dad would not admit it. Like them all, the gear change was a lever on the steering column just behind the steering wheel on the left-hand side. To me it seemed upside down and back to front on the very few times I had to drive. It graunched and it stuck. It was impossible. But Dad never agreed to my suggestion to get it fixed. Stubbornly he'd mutter, 'You just don't know how to drive it.'

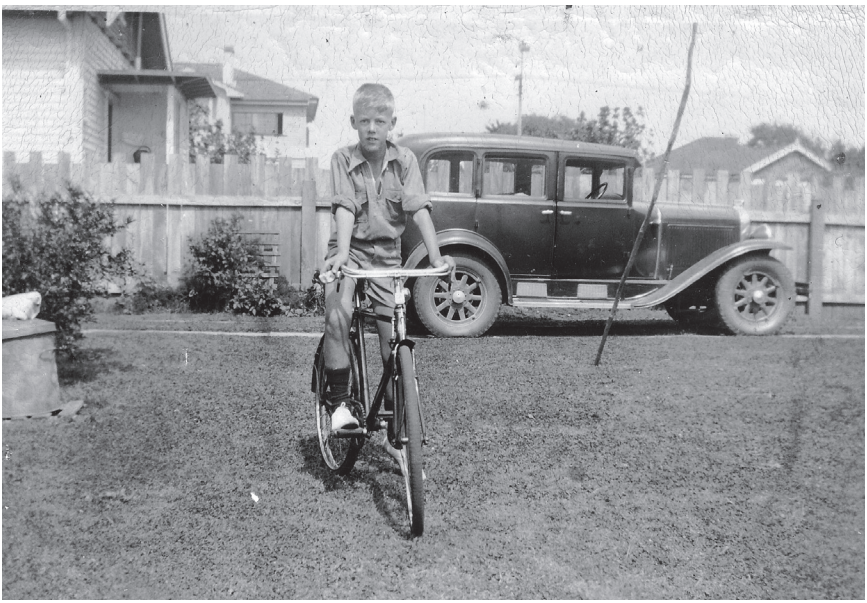
Dad had a park reserved at the Farmers' — got his petrol at their service station behind the big building, and meticulously kept a little notebook he'd had since Citroen days, showing every oil change, service and repairs.

But, as I believe is quite common, Dad never taught me to drive in any of these cars — in fact I was normally not allowed to drive them.

Except once — to the AGS ball in 1942 when Dad approved very much of the girl I was escorting!

But wonderful times were spent in all those vehicles — Sunday drives and picnics with alternating grandparents — to Little Bucklands (where you can always get a swim as opposed to big Bucklands next door which is very tidal). Panmure (on the way to Little Bucklands) in the mid '30s comprised only the hotel and a horse that stood in the corner of a paddock opposite for what seemed like years and years.

We used to enjoy six weeks holiday every Christmas at Milford for years, and then Manly and maybe even Rotorua. I still recall Mum's plaintive cries as Dad drove first or second onto the old vehicular ferries at Birkenhead or Devonport — 'No closer Frank! Frank, stop!' Somehow we all made it.



Jack on his half-size Monarch Special bike with the Pontiac on the pathway at 97 The Drive (then 53). In the house behind fence lived the Hon W. Parry who was Minister of Internal Affairs in the 1935 Labour Government. Note the ti-tree prop for washing line.

Three photos supplied by Jack Baker

Petrol rationing in New Zealand

By Jeanette Grant

Here in New Zealand, petrol rationing began almost with the outbreak of war on 4 September 1939. At first, it was intended that private motorists should supply a 'good reason' before they were allowed to purchase petrol at all. They were to fill out an application form at a post office and then be issued a licence. This measure caused such an outcry that it only lasted one week.

Instead, from 14 September a coupon system was introduced and private motor vehicles were allocated ten gallons per month. These restrictions were suspended for the holiday period over December and January of 1940, but were reintroduced in February. In July there were further cut backs. These new allowances were directly related to the horsepower of the car; four gallons per month were allowed for a car up to 9hp, six gallons up to 14hp and eight gallons for cars over 14hp. These limits, as the Automobile Associations tirelessly pointed out to the government, were far stingier than they were in either England or Australia, but their protestations fell on deaf ears.

The coupons were issued in advance and were only valid for two months. They were numbered in the hope of preventing hoarding. When motorists needed to make a long trip, they had to secure a handful of coupons, so it was common practice for friends and family to pool their coupons. As a last resort, they could be purchased on the black market. Either was considered an offence, but the government found it hard to secure convictions.

Competition and rationing have little in common, so it was not surprising that the New Zealand government decreed that the oil companies had to pool their supplies and resources. There was strict price control and supply measures enforced by the government. For fuel retailers, the war meant a considerable amount of additional bookwork in keeping a record of the rationing stock. It also meant that pumps at retail outlets were painted a uniform grey colour so that there could be no wholesale brand competition, as there was no brand identity. At this time, a significant number of operators still sold fuel from a variety of companies. One-brand operators were in the minority.

Petrol rationing was not discontinued until 1946, although the oil companies had made every effort to return to normal trading patterns as soon as the war ended.

May to August 1945

— a schoolboy's recollection —

By Bryan Boon

After five years and eight months of conflict, the war in Europe came to an end on 7 May 1945. The events during the previous six months were rapid and decisive. 'D DAY' had occurred on 6 June the previous year when liberation forces landed on French soil, and from then onwards Germany was attacked by Allied troops from the west and Russian forces from the east.

By the end of March the final offensive was well under way, and on 27 April armies from the east and west had linked north of Leipzig. The final objective was the capture of Berlin.

At the beginning of May dramatic headlines announced 'Mussolini is Executed', and two days later 'Hitler Dead'. By this time there was a total collapse of Nazi troops and on 7 May we read the two words that the free world had been waiting for: 'Unconditional Surrender'. Germany had capitulated in total defeat.

Celebrations of unrestrained joy took place throughout the world. Here in Auckland, huge boisterous crowds gathered in the central city. The *Auckland Star* reported: 'Singing and shouting with vigour, drinking and kissing promiscuously, and doing a dozen and one things that staid citizens would never do normally made the welkin ring yesterday afternoon, the night, and well into the early hours of the morning.'

But the task was not over yet, especially for those of us living in the Pacific. Japan was still to be crushed. In his speech from Washington on VE Day, President Truman declared that the struggle was only half over for the Americans, and that the Japanese could only expect complete destruction unless they too surrendered.

Weary of war after three and a half years of conflict on two fronts, both in Europe and Asia, America's only objective was to end it as quickly as possible. Yet the Japanese were determined, out of a spirit of national pride, to fight to the bitter end no matter what the cost. Their allegiance to Hirohito, the God Emperor of Japan, was total. Whatever he commanded they would obey.

By the end of May the Japanese were fighting a losing battle and retreating on all fronts. Much of Tokyo had been destroyed by 4000 tons of bombs, and during July the Japanese suffered the heaviest air assaults of the war. Towards the end of that month, representatives of Allied nations met in Potsdam, Germany, and drew up an ultimatum offering the Japanese terms of surrender which were intended to save them from utter destruction, but it was rejected at that point. Little did they know how unwise their decision was.

Just over a week later, on 6 August, a day which will remain forever one of the cardinal dates in human history, an atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima and the city was wiped out. Humankind had unleashed a force which could destroy the world. Three days later another atomic bomb was dropped on Nagasaki — with disastrous results.

Emperor Hirohito realized that Japan was now defeated, and he immediately agreed to accept the provisions of the Potsdam Declaration and replied to the governments of the USA, Great Britain, Russia and China that they would surrender. He commanded all forces to cease operations and surrender their arms.

At midnight on 11 August the British Prime Minister, Mr Attlee, announced in a broadcast to the Empire: 'Japan has today surrendered. The last of our enemies is laid low.' The news was received here at 11am the following day. Only then could celebrations begin.

Wednesday 15 August 1945

I was in the sixth form, my fourth and last year at Auckland Grammar. Tensed up with excitement, we went into morning assembly at nine o'clock. It was the final week of the second term, and we were due to break up for two weeks holiday the following Friday. There seemed to be more absentees than usual; many parents had kept their sons at home so that the expected news could be shared immediately with family and friends.

After the usual formalities the ever dour headmaster Mr Littlejohn indicated that we could expect to hear an announcement fairly soon, and immediately it was received the assembly bell would ring, and we were to proceed back to the hall. We went into our first class and the master set us some reading, and then vanished to the staff common room where there was a radio. No one could concentrate, so we gossiped, played with paper darts and just wasted tine. The master dashed back

a couple of times to check up on us and then disappeared again. Five of the school's prefects were in our form and one would have expected that they would have remained in class to keep order. Not so. They had gathered in their common room to keep up to date and convey first hand the long awaited news.

We went in to our second class after morning break, but this time no master appeared. The air of suppressed excitement was electric. At about 11am the assembly bell rang, and as instructed the boys sped into the hall and before long Mr Littlejohn came on stage, and with a faint hint of a smile announced that the war was over. We were all too self disciplined to clap or let out a cheer, but a few boys dared to just shout a faint 'Hurray'.

He then told us that school would break up immediately, and that we could go home and not return until the beginning of the third term two and a half weeks later. He also said that all the food in the tuckshop (only meat pies and pasties in those days) would be available free of charge. Within ten or fifteen minutes the school was virtually deserted. The bellowing of a powerful fog horn near the Ferry Buildings opened a cacophony of sirens, hooters, factory and train whistles all over the city. This was how the majority of Aucklanders received the news of victory.

I headed home walking along Clive Road and over the mountain to Mt Eden Village to share the news with an aunt who had a shop there.

A group of students from the nearby Teachers' Training College had taken over the intersection of Mt Eden and Stokes roads, and were in a circle dancing the Hokey Tokey, the current popular dance craze. Petrol restrictions meant that there was not too much traffic on the road, but fortunately the trams had continued to run all day.

I then took a tram home to Three Kings, and after lunch trammed back into Queen Street where it seemed that most of Auckland had gathered. Business premises and shops excepting those selling foodstuffs and essential supplies had closed down after the sirens sounded, and there was a frantic rush for transport home. However as the afternoon wore on, every tram, bus, train and ferry brought full quotas of passengers to add to the milling throngs in the city. A victory holiday was proclaimed throughout the country the following day.

It seemed that the crowds in Queen Street had gone mad. The *Auckland Star* reported: 'Auckland Goes Wild. People's Pent up

Emotions are Freed, and the Crowds let go.' Hotels had opened their doors, there was drinking on the streets, and the gutters were filled with broken glass. Ten tons had to be removed overnight and on the following morning. Secondary school boys flocked to the city and formed singing and marching groups, each shouting its particular 'war cry'. I recall that Auckland Grammar was well represented. Traffic officers and police, few in number, were unable to control the crowds. On a more serious note, a civic service of thanksgiving was held at the apex of the Town Hall the following day, and on the following Sunday afternoon another larger service took place in the main hall. Prearranged services were held in most larger city and suburban churches on the evening of VJ Day.

After a couple of hours in Queen Street I had seen enough, and as a teenager felt a little uncomfortable amongst the revelry. I got a tram home and we spent the evening with some newly introduced friends who were rather dull company, not a good way to end the day. The following days seemed an anticlimax after all the excitement.

The world now had to face up to the reality of peace, and those nations which had been actively involved in conflict took many years to rebuild themselves after six years of war.

Washday blues

By Joan Butler

It's Monday again! Summer, winter, wet or fine, Monday is WASH DAY! When I was a little girl I remember being woken very early by the sound of kindling being chopped in the wood shed at the bottom of the garden. This was for the old copper, which was used to boil up the weekly wash.

The 'kindling chore' should have been done well in advance, but the week always seemed too busy — cooking, gardening, housework, shopping, having visits from family members (who always came to stay) — so Monday morning arrived all too soon.

Once the copper boiled and the soap (grated from a huge yellow bar)

had dissolved, in went the laundry and everything was stirred round with the stout wooden 'copper stick'.

But wait! Some of the washing was really dirty and it had to be first scrubbed by hand on the 'washing board'. This was a ridged board rather like a wooden tray — you see them now and then in antique shops. This washing then had to be rinsed before being added to the copper and of course, when there had been family to stay, there were often several loads of washing.

After the boiling, the washing had to be moved from the copper to the tubs for rinsing — a dangerous job as the clothes were boiling hot. Rinsing seemed to go on for ever, then through the wringer, then another rinse, then more wringing. And what a hard job it was to turn wringer or mangle by hand.

And why did the washing always look so white? Older folk will remember the 'blue bag' — a solid square of Reckitt's blue tied up in a square of muslin. Have you heard the slogan: 'Out of the blue comes the whitest wash?' The final rinse always had a squeeze or two of the blue bag, and we always rushed for the same little bag when we had a bee sting.

Now the washing went into cane baskets and had to be carried out to the line. Out came the sturdy 'prop' — usually a long length of manuka wood, perhaps 15–20 feet long, with a fork at the end to support the washing line. The lines were loaded and the pole was hoisted high. With luck, the washing flapped in the breeze. But if the rain came, rapid trips to the line! Rain stopped, and it all began again.

And the copper had to be emptied — bailed out by hand of course — and then the cool soapy water had to be carried out and thrown over fruit trees to help avoid blight. Later the ashes were cleared and spread around the trees. The drudgery was endless.

I remember washing days very clearly, and every time I see my electric washer and drier side by side, I do not regret the lovely past and am filled with gratitude.

Welcomed by strangers

— a life of William Alexander Low —

By Val Sherwood

On researching our family history, it appears that most of our family's forebears who migrated to New Zealand sought a better lifestyle than Britain could offer. William Alexander Low was one exception. He had in no way planned to take up residence in the new colony. It was the calamity of a shipwreck which cast him up on the southern coast of the South Island.

William Low, both of whose parents were of Scottish descent, was born on the island of St Christopher (St Kitts) in the Leeward Islands of the British West Indies. He was given the sobriquet 'Sandy', which stayed with him throughout his life. The recorded natal date varies. The *Otago Witness* offers the years 1800, 1802, 1810 and 1823, though all are agreed on 15 June. Family tradition, and the records of Dr Thomas Morland Hocken who interviewed the subject in September 1887, assert that the accurate date of birth was 1810.

In naval tradition his father, Captain Low, arranged for eight-year-old Sandy to be indentured as an apprentice to the reputable American shipping company of James and Joshua Harper of Alexandra DC, described as 'altogether in the Brazil trade'. It was probably early in 1819 that the young cabin boy sailed off from Barbados for South America, never to see his parents again. Not until he was of advanced age did he reveal that he had been subjected to the bitter experiences inflicted on ship boys of tender years in that era. Although apprenticeship guaranteed a sound education, it is not known how far this extended in his case. The collapse of the shipping company greatly affected the youngster who, according to family lore, supported himself at this time by securing casual work ashore, returning to sea when crewing work became available.

Eventually, at the Washington Navy Yard, he joined the 1832–4 expedition to Sumatra on the frigate USS *Potomac* under Commodore John Downes. This vessel had departed on the direction of US President Andrew Jackson to carry out retribution on the natives of Quallah Battoo for the massacre of crew members of the *Friendship* the previous

year. In that incident, when Captain Charles Endicott had gone ashore at Sumatra to purchase pepper, three boats attacked his ship, murdered the *Friendship*'s first officer and two other crewmen, and plundered the cargo. Arriving at Quallah Battoo with his ship disguised as a Danish merchantman, Captain Downes brought the vessel into the port. A detachment of marines armed with *Potomac*'s lighter cannon were ordered into the ship's boats, from which they bombarded several forts, then the town itself. In all 450 Malays were killed. Two Americans died and several sailors and marines suffered injuries. Downes informed the surviving Rajas that if any American ships were again attacked, the same treatment would be meted out to the perpetrators. Downes' decision not to attempt to negotiate a peaceful settlement was severely criticised by some in America but the majority of the general public was satisfied with the action.

On completion of the expedition Low, experiencing the vagaries of securing a crewing position, signed on for a period on an American whaler, the *Corinthian*, which engaged in sperm whaling in the South Pacific.

Choosing next to join the US naval sailing ship, the *Peacock*, led Low to further adventure. By then aged twenty-two, he had been a seafarer for 14 years. The *Peacock*, commanded by US Navy Lieutenant William L. Hudson, sailed from the US Navy Yard at Norfolk, Virginia, in August 1838. It was part of a squadron which made up the United States Exploring Expedition which was directed to gain an improved knowledge of the Pacific Ocean, with regard particularly to geographical and astronomical sciences. Captain Hudson was second in command to Lieutenant Charles Wilkes, who was aboard the flagship *Vincennes*. Other vessels in the squadron were the *Porpoise*, the *Relief*, the *Seagull* and the *Flying Fish*. With the rest of the squadron, the *Peacock* had taken part in two Antarctic cruises as well as a survey of the South Pacific islands. She then carried out independent survey work south of Hawaii. During a subsequent stop in Australia she had needed further repairs due to rotted structural timber.

Obeying Wilkes' directions to rejoin the squadron at the mouth of the Columbian River, Hudson approached the river's northern entrance at 5pm on 17 July 1841. The *Peacock* attempted to enter the river following a pre-advised channel, but this had shifted. A strong wind and swirling currents ran the ship aground on a northern spit where

she was pounded by turbulent breakers which dropped her repetitively onto the sandbank. Debris-clogged pumps were unable to eject the water which poured into the ship. The companion ship *Flying Fox* was unable to assist. Distress flares were fired. By morning it was clear the ship could not be saved. Hudson ordered the masts cut away. Boats took the crew and scientific instruments to shelter at Baker's Bay at the foot of Cape Disappointment. All men were saved though one was severely injured. Following the loss of the *Peacock*, Lieutenant Wilkes proceeded with the planned survey of the Columbia River. Low, who had transferred to the *Vincennes*, gained skills in the river survey which were to prove of great value in the future.

On completion of Wilkes' expeditional voyage, the commander was subjected to court-martial for the loss of the *Peacock* on the Columbia River bar, for the mistreatment of his subordinate officers, and for the excessive punishment of his sailors. Though acquitted of most charges, he was found guilty of illegally punishing men in his squadron. He survived this setback and, though he faced a further court martial in 1866, continued his career to retire as an admiral. Interestingly, it has been speculated that his harsh disciplinary code and obsessive behaviour presented a model for Herman Melville's Captain Ahab in his narrative *Moby Dick*.

Sandy Low, after having been paid off in Honolulu, appears to have turned his back on the US Navy, choosing instead to take up a position on a Sydney-based whaler seeking out whales in the vicinity of Samoa. It was in Sydney that Low first came into contact with John Jones (usually known as 'Johnny'), the owner of several small whaling vessels. Jones, with a man named Wentworth, had attempted, unsuccessfully, to buy up almost the whole of the South Island. Jones did manage to hold land at his whaling station of Waikouaiti, north of Dunedin, which he later developed as a settlement, and also at sites in South Otago and Southland. Back in Sydney, Low joined one of Jones' whalers, the *Scotia*, under Captain Ward, and so sailed into New Zealand waters for the first time, engaging in whaling around the Kapiti Coast. In Wellington he signed on with Captain W. Ellis aboard the *Luna* which was engaged in picking up goods in Australia for trade around the New Zealand coast.

In October 1843 the *Luna* loaded a cargo in Melbourne and crossed the Tasman to the South Island of New Zealand, calling at Bluff to

set down then pick up cargo. Voyaging north, bound for Dunedin and having sailed only a few nautical miles along the coast, the *Luna* ran onto the Waipapa Reef, which was later the scene of many shipwrecks. These included the *Kate* (1857), *Onward* (1863), *Aparima* (1871), *William Gifford* (1877), *Pioneer* (1883) and *Ino* (1889). When the SS *Tararua* was wrecked on this reef in 1881 only 20 of 151 passengers and crew survived. All persons aboard the *Luna*, however, were rescued.

Along with many Pakeha caught in parlous situations in the early days of New Zealand settlement, Low had reason to be grateful for the support and hospitality of the Maori. He was made welcome at the kaika at Toetoe's Bay, situated on the edge of a lagoon at the mouth of the Mataura River, adjacent to the site where Tommy Chasland had established his whaling station in the mid 1830s. Low had escaped the tyranny of the US naval ships, had been subjected to the vagaries of whaling and coastal shipping and survived two shipwrecks. Now he found himself safe on land and among friends, but penniless. The contracts of seamen on both whaling and trading vessels in that era deemed wages to be a percentage of the ship's profit, at the end of the voyage. A voyage ending in shipwreck meant no profit, therefore there would be no pay.

Sandy Low is said to have declined John Jones' offer of employment as a whaler, preferring the option of trading with the Maori on Jones' behalf. Whale oil obtained locally was exchanged for blankets, flour, moleskin trousers, tobacco and spirits. The transactions were cashless. Reportedly he quickly made himself useful in the kainga and was popular among the Maori. Displaying no eagerness to return to the sea, he was seemingly content to live peacefully on land for the first time since his childhood. In February 1846, aware that a new settlement of Scottish migrants, New Edinburgh, was to be established at Otakou, he learned that Charles Henry Kettle had arrived to survey the area of the proposed new town. Recognising the opportunity to benefit from his experience of surveying on the Columbia River, Low made his way to Otepoto (later Dunedin), first rowing in an open boat to an old whaling station at Taieri Mouth, then on foot over the hills to the Otakau Harbour. He arrived before the first survey pegs were hammered in.

Captain Kettle (who in vain urged others to pronounce his appellation as 'Kettelle') was at the age of 25 years already well experienced in land and marine surveys. He had gathered a party of eleven surveyors

supported by a team of 25 labourers to assist with the undertaking which involved the first extensive use of trigonometrical methods in New Zealand. Surveyors' labourers were employed at the rate of 14 shillings a week, plus rations which consisted of 10lbs flour, 10lbs pork, 1½ lbs sugar and ¼ lb tea. Of the 25, six were literate; the rest signed with 'his X mark'. Low's fluency in the Maori language would have been a useful asset to Kettle in dealing with the Maori labourers. A close knowledge of Edinburgh enabled Kettle to reproduce some of the characteristics and street names of that city, which was a requirement of the undertaking. In March 1848 the essential survey work was virtually completed. Significantly, the two-year duration of the exercise offered stability and financial security to Low for the first time in his 36 years.

Family tradition says that shortly after Low's arrival at Otepoti, Chief Taiaroa offered him a young woman of the tribe, of high lineage, in marriage. The couple was said to have been wed by the rites of the Christian church. Possibly this was carried out by the Methodist missionary resident at Johnny Jones' settlement at Waikouaiti, the Reverend Charles Creed, who made occasional visits to Dunedin. With Sandy Low's bride came residential rights at a cove at the edge of the sea where a small whare was erected. This site today lies at the corner of Princes and Rattray streets, and extended along to where the Grand Hotel and Cassino now stand, exactly opposite the Cargill Monument in Dunedin's Exchange. The adjacent land had been the site of a small kaika of the 'Ngai-puhi' hapu. It was an idyllic situation. The adjacent Kaituna, a sparkling little stream, almost encircled the block of land as it found its way to the sea. Here at the cove named Otepoti, Maori tied up their boats on a firm, pebbly beach, and rippling blue waves lapped right up to the site of the Low whare. Flanked with native trees, shrubs and creepers, manuka, flax, tutu, cabbage tree and ferns, the cove rang with birdsong at dawn and dusk. The heavily forested hills behind provided a backdrop for this scenic beauty.

A son, Willie, was born to Sandy Low and his wife, but the first Mrs Low died early. As a child Willie was seemingly unaware that he shared a Maori heritage; when his tattooed relations came to visit him he was terrified and hid under a bed.

When on 23 March 1848 the *John Wickliffe* arrived at Port Chalmers from Gravesend, London, Sandy Low was there to welcome the settlers. A day or two later some came up the harbour in boats to Otepoti where

they were carried ashore by the Maori boatmen and set down in what is now Water Street. From here they explored the new habitat, dazedly checking the surveying pegs and string used by the survey team to mark out the planned streets and sections, selecting and claiming property in the nascent town of Dunedin. The *Philip Laing*, sailing from Greenock and Milford Haven arrived a little later, on 15 April. On the ship's arrival the Maori had cast a fish upon the deck, a tradition to welcome the strangers.

Low's employment with the surveying team was behind him, but on the arrival of the settlers he found himself a niche in the new society as a licensed waterman, providing essential support to those who settled around the harbour edge. As time went by he built up a fleet of ferry boats, filling the critical need for transport around and across the harbour, servicing small ships, and transporting goods more efficiently than by land. Use of these ferries was at a premium in the days when the Vauxhall Gardens, an enterprise set up by the colourful Dr Shadrack Jones, was a popular recreational venue.

Shortly after the settlement was founded, Low chose a section in Walker Street, on a rise at the southern end of the town. Here he built a cottage in which he lived almost uninterruptedly for the rest of his life. As the town population grew Low found time to fill the role of 'bell ringer' or town crier. Sandy's regular beat covered the most densely populated area of town, up and down Princes Street, from its southernmost point (now the Southern Cemetery) to the Octagon. The arrival of overseas mail, the movement of shipping, the release of outstanding overseas or local news, or the advent of an important or unusual event would be the impetus for Sandy Low to take up his bell and ring it vigorously as he walked from one end of the town to the other, announcing the outstanding news in a voice well developed for the task by whale watching.

Not everyone approved of his enthusiasm however. Towards the end of the fifties the Town Board, by whom he was employed, was set aside in favour of the more formal and important City Council. The first elected mayor, and previous alderman, was the successful architect William Mason, at one time in a land sales and architecture partnership with Thomas Paton in Epsom, Auckland. It was Mason who built the Epsom Mill and farmed in that area. In Dunedin one day, when Sandy Low was proclaiming information on a sale by auction, his voice and

bell ringing in the streets, the mayor declaimed, 'Do not ring your bell as long as that.' To which Sandy replied, quoting from the Good Book, 'It is written, "What thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might".' and he rang the bell with great enthusiasm. Mayor Mason immediately afterwards saw to it that a new bylaw prohibiting bell ringing was introduced. Sandy's occupation had gone. The council then having a problem of broadcasting the news, hired Joe Munton, newly arrived from Victoria, to blow his trumpet. According to the *Otago Witness*, this man's trumpet became damaged beyond use, so that the role of town crier in Dunedin town no longer existed. A colourful element of the Dunedin scene had been lost. What is said to have been a good likeness of Low in the act of announcing an auction was shown in the Dunedin Exhibition of 1865. The bell found a home at the Otago Settlers Museum, where there is an artist's impression of him as town crier drawn in crayon and pencil by Peter McIntyre.

In response to a request, Captain William Cargill, Resident Agent for the New Zealand Company, set up a Voluntary Ladies' Committee to receive young lady immigrants. One of these recent arrivals, Elizabeth Fraser from Edinburgh, married William Low on 7 May 1853 . There were six children from the union.

The opening of the 'Episcopalian' church at Bell Hill gave Low a new, more dignified role; that of verger and bell ringer, where his attention to his duties merited and received recognition. He was a keen Freemason and was at the first meeting of the 'brethren' held in Dunedin in 1859, holding honourable responsible positions in this and various other lodges, and in later years serving as Tyler.

Low often displayed a capricious sense of humour and was fond of a practical joke. No single incident displayed this element of his character more than the 'Great Midnight Hoax'. It was in January 1865, after a long period of negotiation and indecision, that Sir George Grey was expected to visit the southern city to open the Great Exhibition. The excitement level was high. Much detail and energy went into the preparations which included the training of volunteers, and the setting up of bonfires, illuminations and floral decorations on a grand scale. On the appointed date the plans were put into action and all was in readiness for the governor's arrival. The day had turned to dusk when word was received that His Excellency would not land until the next day. All plans were put on hold until the morning. Two

days passed without a sighting of his ship. At midnight of the second night, however, there was the sound of a bugle at the rear of the police barracks. The cannon was fired, then a rifle shot was heard. These were the planned signals for the citizens to prepare for the governor's arrival. As arranged, rifles were shot serially in response, to advise people in outlying districts of the arrival. Almost the entire population of startled inhabitants, some from as far away as Mosgiel (27km west of Dunedin), tumbled out of bed and set out in horse-drawn vehicles and on foot, all hurrying to the waterfront in a general uproar, carrying out their pre-assigned roles. On reaching the rallying point where all the local dignitaries had gathered, however, they discovered that they had been made fools of. The firing of the cannon had been a practical joke. Great was the ire of the police, commissioners and the public, though the local publicans were pleased with the spin-off. It was as well for the perpetrators that their secret was well kept. Eventually public opinion mellowed. A few days after the event the *Otago Witness* did not know whether to be amused or disgusted, remarking that the governor, in not arriving at all, had himself played a hoax on the people of the South Island. The comment was passed that at least the night was a fine one. It was not until 1867 that the governor finally arrived at Port Chalmers, to a rather less warm welcome than he might have received two years previously. A much longer period of time passed before the practical jokers were unmasked.

Over the years Dunedin's 'Old Identity' won an affectionate respect from his fellow citizens. Eventually the time came when his presence no longer brightened the streets of Dunedin. Due to the afflictions of old age he stayed close to home with the comfort of his pipe. His absence was not unnoticed. The *Otago Witness* in 1887 presented an account of his life, along with the claim that he was without doubt the 'Oldest Resident' in Dunedin, urging that a small testimonial be raised for this well known civic personage. Many kind words were published of his value to the community over the years. In the way of newspapers the story of the Great Hoax was included in the article, but no actual claim made that Low had been involved. In fact it was not until 1974 that the names of Sandy Low and his co-conspirators, Ben Davis and a man named Alibaster, were openly stated in the press. The details were supplied by A.H. Reed, who had won this information from descendants of Low and Davis. It was revealed that the trio had confessed the truth

to their friend, police Sergeant Major Bevin, but he had kept his own counsel.

It was in response to the 'Oldest Identity' article that Dr Hocken interviewed Sandy Low, making brief notes of his adventures. When Low died on 1 April 1890, aspects of his life were documented in various obituaries which demonstrated a genuine sense of loss at the departure of the 'distinctive landmark' from their midst. Low was never a rich man. He had had no wish to accompany those who rushed off to Gabriel's Gully in the 1860s to seek their fortunes. The drama and excitement in the extreme that had been foisted upon him in his early years was sufficient to last him a lifetime. Narratives of his life became part of Dunedin's social history, to be repeated again and again in newspapers over the years.

In an *Otago Witness* article written soon after his passing, its author said in part, 'It was not in Sandy's nature to do anything underhand or dishonest, and where he could help his fellow countrymen he always was willing to do so.'

This was a fine epitaph, indeed.

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My Epsom villa

By Christine Black

My grandparents, Arthur Henry George Hunter and Nellie Merritt Butler (always Queenie), were married on Thursday 15 April 1920 at 3.15pm at the Butler home, Oruru, 4 Arney Road, Remuera, and moved into a newish, double-bay, transitional villa at 11 Epsom Avenue, Auckland SE3. In so doing they established a family home in which four generations of the family would live. The structure and use of the house itself has evolved with the needs and expectations of each generation.

Mr and Mrs A.H.G. Hunter came from quite different backgrounds, Arthur from a Katikati farming family and Queenie from a Remuera business one. I have no memory of ever hearing the story of how they met, but Arthur came to Auckland and worked in the ANZ bank and Queenie was one of the first women to work in the Bank of New South Wales during the war, and I am guessing that this was the connection.

Arthur returned in 1919 from a relatively uneventful war served with the 16th Company of the Imperial Camel Corp in Egypt, and returned to work in the ANZ. He worked there until his retirement. He was born in 1884 and I think he went on working into his early 60s. Queenie was an active member of various groups at St Marks Church, Remuera, all her life. She had a large group of friends, played bridge and enjoyed concerts. They had one child, Robert (Tim) Arthur Butler Hunter, who was born on 13 March 1921. He attended Model Country School, King's School and King's College.

Epsom Avenue at the Manukau Road end was formed in land that had been grain farms. Still visible today are the lines (now mostly groups) of totara trees that were intended to form wind breaks. We have a group of one big and four smaller on our northwestern fence, and there was a line from our northeastern corner back towards Bracken Avenue which were cut down by a developer in the early 1990s.

There is a plan, dated early 1900s, showing the area including the north side of Epsom, Bracken and Domett avenues called the township of Alburnia. It shows the sections divided as they are now. This was owned by the Auckland Hospital and Charitable Aid Board, and the house stood on leasehold land. By 1927 it was the Auckland Hospital Board. The first lease is dated 20 May 1907 with a term of 63 years. The

size of the land is 1285sqm, which is slightly wider than the adjoining properties because there is a sewer running along the eastern boundary that originally was on a reserve.

In 1911 the lease was transferred to four brothers of the Pearce family, and the first mortgage is recorded on the title. The house was built by the Pearce Bros in 1911. They also built numbers 19 (demolished) and 21. There was a Mr Pearce still living on the corner of Epsom Avenue in the 1950s, and I was told that he had been the builder.

A house built in 1911 is normally categorized as a transitional villa, but this house tends to still reflect mainstream villa design: a central hallway, with the 'best' rooms closest to the front door, a ceiling height decorative division in the hallway, with a curtain separating the public and private areas of the house, and pressed steel ceilings in the two reception rooms. The basic plan shows a standard late villa layout.

The most notable transition features are the asymmetrical front hallway and off-centre front door, less ornate fretwork decoration along the front veranda and the inclusion of the bay windows under the main roof.

The houses built by Mr Pearce in Epsom Avenue all featured two rows of small, square, alternating coloured glass (pink/green and gold/

The house as built, 1920

green) at the top of the sash windows in the rooms facing the road and the western facing main living room.

Inside there were Holland blinds and lace curtains, the floors were shellacked almost black around the edges and carpet squares then covered most of the floor. The hall, master bedroom, sitting room and dining room had wooden moulded picture rails running around about 500mm from the ceiling. The windows were double sashes with cords. (I can clearly remember as a child being forbidden to put my head out an open sash window in case the cord broke — although by the early 1950s the number of coats of paint made a precipitous descent of the lower sash virtually impossible!) The upper parts of the windows were able to be opened in some rooms until the 1970s, but are no longer free.

The bathroom had a large bath with feet, linoleum on the floor and porcelain basin, with gas califont for hot water. The house was originally piped for gas lighting, one heater and a stove. There is no record of the date that electricity was connected but almost certainly there was electric lighting by the late '20s.

Queenie Hunter in driveway, c.1920

There were two fireplaces, back-to-back, one in the lounge and one in the kitchen, originally with a coal range. These were built with rocking grates that allowed the ashes to be swept down the chimney space between the floor and the ground. An annual and difficult chore was then removing the ash, since as the chimneys were central the access was difficult. The lavatory and washhouse were in an under-cover extension from the back veranda.

It remained as built until my parents, Tim Hunter and Joan McInness, were married in 1947 and the first major renovation took place. Dad was a new teacher and housing was

Lace curtains and hydrangeas, c.1930

short so it was decided to divide the house into two flats. As it turned out, Dad began his career at King's College, Papakura High School and Pukekohe High School which involved a great deal of travelling.

Mum had worked in the office at the Auckland Teachers' College but gave up this job when she got married. She grew up in Herne Bay and continued to be a keen tennis player there.

At that time I don't think any attention was given to preserving the original character of the building, and fortunately the layout lent itself easily to division straight down the middle. A bathroom and bedroom were added onto the western side of the house and another bedroom was added about 1958 by enclosing the western open porch and increasing the floor area.

I was born in 1952 and my brother Robert in 1954. We both went to

The house from Epsom Avenue, 1950s

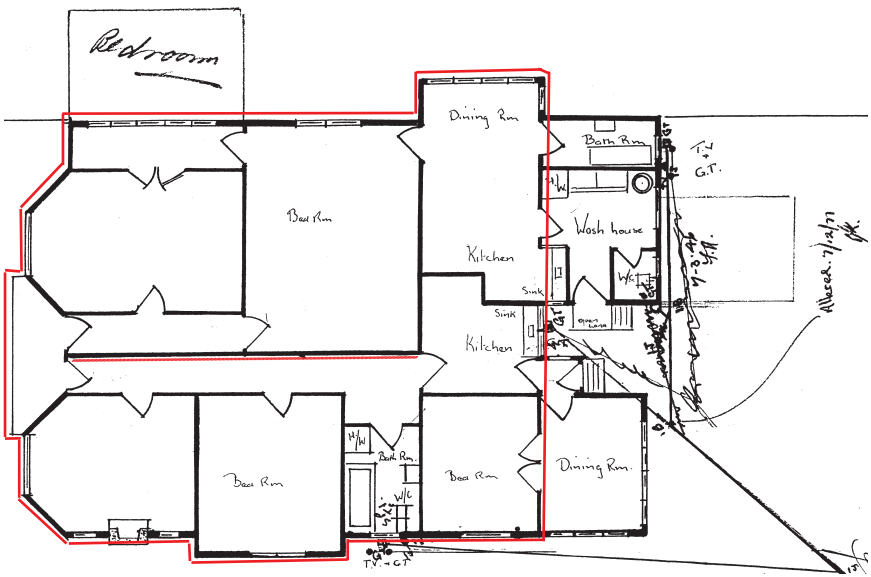

Diagram shows the original 1920 (red line) floor plan and later extensions

The wall down the middle of the hallway was added when the house was converted into flats. All images in this article were supplied by Christine Black.

Christmas group in the back garden, 1950

The same spot, c.1980

Model Country and Normal Intermediate School. I went on to Epsom Girls' Grammar and Robert to King's. It was an excellent place to live in the 1950s and 1960s, with transport to town, movies and sports fields. Robert and I rode bikes to school and around Epsom to friends' houses.

We enjoyed having grandparents on the spot, and Grannie was the one who looked after us often when we were home from school sick, and she used to take us on outings in the school holidays to beaches, the museum and movies.

The garden is almost completely flat and has the fertile volcanic soil typical of Epsom. Arthur was a keen vegetable gardener, and with a small piece of land he leased at 26 Epsom Avenue we were almost self sufficient for vegetables. There was a range of fruit trees, and although I have a photograph showing poultry in a pen I do not remember hens in my lifetime. The front garden was for flowers and shrubs.

In the back garden there were several small wooden sheds, a firewood/tools shed and a pigeon house. These were pulled down in the 1960s, and Dad built a large model railway shed and workshop. He planned to have a garden railway but this never eventuated.

The first garage was a carport added onto the back of the house in the early 1960s. The driveway was first gravelled, later asphalted in the 1960s and redone with paving stones about 1988.

The first car, an Austin A50 was bought by my father about 1962. The first TV arrived in 1967, thankfully as I'm sure I was the only girl in my 4th form class without one!

Mum and Dad had always wanted to live in the country so after Queenie died in 1975, they bought a piece of land in Okaihau, Bay of Islands. My husband David was at Medical School the following year and so we bought the house from my parents in 1977 and returned the house to a single dwelling, almost exactly as it started. At this time we removed all the scrim and lined the walls with gib board. The original bathroom was renovated and some of the older casement windows were replaced with aluminium framed ones. However these have all now been returned to more appropriate wooden framed casements. We installed gas heating, hot water and stove, and boarded up the kitchen fireplace with the intention of recovering it again later.

We moved in May 1977 with two children, Geoffrey and Caroline, aged 3 and 18 months with not a single room completely finished! The

kitchen and laundry were ready almost immediately but for a while dinner was served from the kitchen to the table over several piles of timber and wallboard. Our third child, Joanna, was born in 1980. The carport at the front of the house was built and the drive and turning circle improved.

The house was rented from 1983 until late 1987 and we have lived here again ever since. In 2001 another renovation was completed, adding another bedroom and ensuite, a new laundry, and opening up the rear north facing living area and adding a deck. The kitchen fireplace was uncovered and a wood burner with steel flue installed.

The railway shed was replaced with a steel Skyline garage and workshop with a concrete floor. For ten years there was a swimming pool but this has now been filled in.

It is, like all villas, an expensive house to heat, despite insulation in the ceiling. This is very much balanced by the ease of cooling in the summer. The most recent addition, in the face of an increasing number of burglaries and intruders, has been a more secure fence and electrically controlled gate.

We have inherited over the years hundreds of photographs showing the life and times of the residents of this house, children, Christmas groups, pets, birthday parties, garden triumphs and new (second hand in most cases!) cars. Epsom has been a good, comfortable suburb for over a hundred years and Epsom Avenue has been part of that.

What brought Arthur and Queenie Hunter to Epsom in 1920? The choice of a new and developing housing area here certainly gave them good public transport to the central city for work and to Newmarket for shopping, St Marks Church Remuera, and Queenie's Upland Road family. There were schools and shops within walking distance. I think they would have valued the Edwardian, middle class image of a villa. Epsom Avenue had a number of young families in the 1920s (as it did again in the 1970s) which created a friendly neighbourhood. Epsom has always been a good place to live and bring up children and enjoy the many facilities of Auckland as it developed.

They were very happy here, as have been the succeeding generations, and the property and the family have become an interwoven history.

Next year we plan to celebrate the house turning 100 years old — well the front half anyway!

Spending a penny

By Jeanette Grant

I don't remember hearing the word 'toilet' used until 1953 when I started at EGGS (Epsom Girls Grammar School). Everyone at home and at school had referred to them as 'lavatories'.

Of course in those days, they were not something that was often referred to in polite conversation. Even in the home, mothers and children talked about 'Number ones' and 'Number twos'. We lived in a very polite, almost Victorian world. One talked about 'spending a penny' and if we had ever overheard someone saying 'Oh shit!' it would probably have meant nothing.

Maybe I should explain for the benefit of modern readers, that 'spending a penny' referred to the fact that women using public toilets had to pay for the privilege. The toilet doors worked on the 'coin in the slot' principle and it literally cost you a penny a time. This was a prime example of sex discrimination, as men had no such charge!

Sixty years ago, Auckland was a mixture of the old and the new. We moved into a 40-year-old house in 1944. It had been built nearly 20 years before the sewerage scheme had reached Mt Eden. A section had been partitioned off the end of the outside washhouse for 'the lav'. It had an overhead water tank which provided a good head of water when you 'pulled the chain'. As a child I found it useful, as I could hide a book on the top of it.

The door opened directly onto the back yard and people used to leave it open all the time. This irritated my mother intensely. One of my first successful bright ideas came when I was ten years old. I went to a local hardware shop, bought one of the springs used to shut gates automatically, and fitted it on the inside of the door. Problem solved! Sixty years later it is still working well.

At the rear was a slab of concrete with a ventilation 'mushroom' in one corner. About ten years after we moved in, we noticed an unpleasant smell and called a plumber. He made the discovery that when the sewer was dug — and it was only about six feet from the lavatory — all they had done was connect an overflow pipe to it from the pre-existing septic tank. This had worked satisfactorily for thirty years, but now it needed to be properly emptied and filled in, with a direct connection to the sewer.

I can well remember the school lavatories at Maungawhau District School. The school had opened in 1913 but the sewerage did not arrive until 1921. I think those original lavatories were still in use when I started school in 1945. They were right at the rear of the school, along the Ellerton Road boundary. There were two small blocks side by side. I have no idea what the boys' lavatories were like, but the girls' had a row of half a dozen which opened directly to the open air. A corrugated iron fence provided 'privacy'. The staff had no separate facilities. They had to share these with the children — all 600-plus of them.

I was not unfamiliar with more primitive systems. We used to go camping every Christmas and many of the camping grounds were used only during these holidays so the facilities were basic. Long drop toilets were common, and quite alarming for small children. However, looking back I do wonder if using such crude facilities made mother's instructions to wash your hands really seem relevant. We actually encountered some in regular use only a few years ago while touring the South Island. The public toilets in a remote spot where the road left the west coast to head inland to Haast had no power or water supply — and a large number of tourists — so some unsung engineering genius had designed modern *hygienic* longdrop toilets. The deep hole under the seat was still there, but rather than sitting on a wooden bench with a hole in it you seemed, at a casual glance, to be using a 'normal' toilet pan.

Even in Auckland, some areas were more primitive than others. My husband arrived in New Zealand in 1955, and the following year his family began building a house in Fairfax Avenue, Northcote. It ran off Onewa Road, and the streets on the far side still had 'honey buckets', and the 'night cart' came around once a week to collect their contents.

When my aunt and uncle bought a farm in Hunters Road, Taupaki, in 1947 it had a real 'outhouse' — a little wooden outside toilet with a bucket under the wooden seat. I believe Uncle Monty dug a hole and buried the contents every few days. At first there was no toilet paper either. Sheets of paper cut from magazines were spiked on a nail instead.

It reminded me of a rhyme which seemed very bold to me as a child:

> In the days of old when men were bold, ere paper was invented
> Men wiped their rump on a piece of stump and walked away contented.

When we bought our first bach at Little Manly in 1979 it was about two years before the local sewerage scheme was completed. The council had put a moratorium on new buildings, as the soil was saturated by all the septic tanks on the peninsula. The previous owners of our place had had a rusty old Elsan (an early portable toilet) in a shed. We used a much more modern one from our caravan. The boys were encouraged to use the public toilets at the beach as much as possible, and every 2–3 days John had to take it down there and empty it. When the sewerage finally arrived and we installed a proper toilet, we were required to have a larger water tank. A 5000 gallon concrete tank was delivered — and shivered to pieces as they tried to install it. A second one was duly delivered and a pipe fitted from the spouting to fill it. We were there for another twelve years, and only once had to fit a hose onto the outlet and use the stored water to fill the original corrugated iron water tanks.

In later years, town water arrived in the street and all new houses were expected to get connected. One neighbour was appalled at the price (about $7000) quoted to get the water brought up their driveway from the road, but a bit of lateral thinking solved the problem very neatly. They had a water meter installed on the street boundary, and when their tanks got low, they just attached a garden hose and filled up that way. A lot cheaper than buying it by the tankerload. There are still about 4000 households on the peninsula who rely exclusively on tank water, and half a dozen firms of water tankers are kept very busy in summer topping them up.

We still have the outside toilet in Mt Eden. It is very useful when you are gardening. My father thought that inside toilets were unhygienic, so it was not until after he died in 1980 that we had a second one installed in the bathroom. The original one has had a couple of additions. There is now a handbasin in it and it has its own light. When I was a child, there was a light in the wash house next door only. At night, it was necessary to either take a torch or turn on the washhouse light and leave the door open. As a result, none of us were ever afraid of the dark.

However, in 1967 I went overseas for a year and Mum was persuaded by a cousin to have her son's fiancée Marnie to live with her for the four months before the wedding. Marnie was afraid of the dark, so Dad took a tapping from the washhouse light and put a light in the toilet. Turning on the one switch lit up both lights. So simple. He could have done it 20 years earlier!

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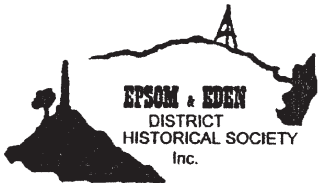

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