

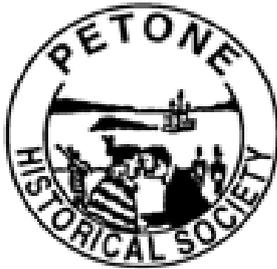


# PETONE HISTORICAL SOCIETY inc.

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## Chronicle April 2014



### **2014 committee**

#### **President**

Pam Hanna

#### **Deputy Chair**

*Ruth Dickson*

#### **Secretary.**

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*Joan Hewson*

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*Marianne Jenner*

#### **Committee**

*Basil Chan*

*Zandra Brickhill*

*Hellen Swales*

*Leonie Dobbs*

Clark Stiles manager of  
Hutt City Heritage



Welcome to our April, Chronicle. We have had a very active first three months of the year. A major task has been the re-establishing of our museum after it had been turned into Santa's Grotto, which was most successful. Thanks to Hellen who has undertaken the job of putting things back. Our new exhibitions, which Deanna Puata has kindly assembled for us, attract a great amount of attention. She is working on one for Leibzeit's Novelty Shop and I have just about completed the story of Odlin's Timber yard. We have had a lot of assistance from National Library, Hutt City, Dowse and Fletcher Trust who have provided photos and some other material. I am just trying to discover what was the reason Odlin Timber yard closed after being regarded as one of the major timber yards in New Zealand.

We have had very good attendances at the museum with an average of over 20 per day. With assistance of Syd Moore I opened the jail on Fair day. Well over 100 people visited on the day .

Our plea for volunteers to open the jail for a couple of hours on Saturday and Sunday resulted in two people willing to offer their time. If we can get a few more it will mean a roster can be established and make life easier for all.

The major attraction for visitors appears to be the jail itself and the cells. Many like to be locked in to see what it was like. We let them out again!!

We have also had visitors to our committee meetings. Lyn Riley, the function manager of "Alfred Coles House" visited us. She is going to set up a display on the history of the house and hopes to have a regular heritage walk from the house. She would like to hire a guide for the tours. Any takers? Our society will undertake any training necessary so you can be an efficient guide.

We also had a visit from Thomasin Sleigh from Digital NZ who showed us how to access their site which contains many millions of heritage photos. Have a look at their website digitalnz

**March 20 was our Annual General meeting** It was well attended with more than 20 people attending. There was no dramas. Our financial position is quite sound and a committee was elected. You can see their names. Two prospective members were absent and they will be contacted this week. Pam Hanna was elected president.

Clark Stiles spoke on ways to access the digital archives of council. They have about 200 photos on line. He told us about how to access sites for research and family history. The growing need to be computer literate was clearly illustrated. To get into the city website, visit Hutt Libraries on line. For those who are unsure about computers and want to learn Hutt City library has courses every so often while those older can always join senior net. It is great.

### **Heritage in the News.**

Petone is again in the news, with the proposal, put before council, to build a 12,000 seat boutique stadium on Petone Recreation Ground. This would of course destroy much of the green space available to the community in the centre of town and will affect the heritage landscape. The cost of the project will, I think, eventually scuttle it, which will be to relief of many in Petone. At the meetings held to discuss the project there was little support for a stadium on many fronts but there was also some support from those who saw economic value to Petone It needs much deeper investigation before any decision can be reached. Over the next four weeks the local community will have the chance to voice their opinions on the viability of the stadium and why it should or should not proceed. It will affect our heritage value. What is your opinion? If the public do not respond to consultation then they will only have themselves to blame for the decision, whatever it may be. Have your say and show council that People of Petone do care what happens in their town. If you don't take part don't moan about the result.

The "**Old Jail**" needs some maintenance and we are joining with the J.S.P. to renew the lighting which at the moment is quite dangerous. That will be completed shortly. Recently the outside door was replaced and the building is in need of repainting. The original door at the rear of the cell block, is in bad repair and that also will have to be looked at.

Question to you! Is the Name "**OLD JAIL**" Museum the best, or do you have any other suggestions?

### ***Coming Activities***

Because of the difficulties in getting people to attend evening meetings we decide to only have 4 evening meetings in combination with Lower Hutt Historical Society. I do not have final date for the next meeting which may be in Lower Hutt on 8<sup>th</sup> May at "The Anchorage" in High Street

We have applied for a grant to reprint our popular "Discover Petone" It is some 12 years since the first one was printed and so far we have distributed some 8 -10 thousand copies. It is getting a facelift and brought into the digital age with q codes. This is being redesigned now.

It is also intended , funds permitting, to publish our long promised book on Memories about 20<sup>th</sup> Century Petone. We have the material and at last obtained a source for photographs. Our only other task is to ensure that those people who have offered their own memories are happy to see them in print. We received them with the expectation of them being published. There is still time if any members would like to contribute but time is running out. We have a good variety of stories from different times beginning with soldiers returning from the Boer War in 1903 and continue with how people remember growing up in Petone and what life was like in 20<sup>th</sup> Century Petone.

## ***Stories about Petone..... One person's memories of working at Petone Post Office.***

Changes to our postal services brought about by the greater use of digital material and therefore far fewer letters or need for postal services. Stories about postal services being reduced to two or three times a week and resultant loss of jobs abound. The main postal centre in Petone is closing over the next year or so and all mail will be sorted from Palmerston North, which is the centre for the lower North Island. The following memory of working at Petone Post Office, written by Joan, my wife, is an example of how the Post Office operated.

### **PETONE POST OFFICE.. by Joan Hewson.**

The Post Office was first established in Petone on 1 July 1878 in a shop owned by Mr S.R.Johnson. However early records show that the town's postal history dates back to the early settlement in July 1840. A mail service started between Thorndon and Petone, which was then called Britannia. Dispatches daily from Thorndon at 8 a.m. and a return from Petone at 1 p.m.. Charges were 2d for letters and 1d for newspaper. It operated by boat although in very poor weather mail was dispatched by foot.

On 1 August 1884 it transferred to the railway station. On 24 August it transferred again to a site between Sydney and Fitzherbert Street. On 2 July 1900 it opened on the corner of Britannia and Jackson Street. MOSB opened in 1885. On 1 Feb 1934 Petone opened as a Savings Bank ledger office.

I started work during the Christmas holidays in 1946, delivering telegrams on my bike all round Petone.. I was bitten by a dog once.

I left school after spending 3 years at H.V.M.T.C. and started at the mail Order Savings Bank in Petone in January 1947.

I was the only girl in the office. Women tellers were not allowed at that time. I typed all the work from the tellers and added up the section cards which had transactions; deposits and withdrawals that had been made that day. These sections had to be balanced every month. I progressed to the window where you came in to have the withdrawal written in your passbook before taking it to the teller to be paid the amount stated.

Then accountancy machines were introduced. I sat my junior and senior exams on these.

There were three departments – telegraph; Money Order Savings Bank and Postal, stamps, parcels etc. The postmaster and his family lived upstairs in a flat. A Mr Marston was the Postmaster when I started. In 1952 I left to start my family and it was not until 1970? That I again returned to work in Petone Post office.

There were changes ahead and rebuilding inside was a feature. When it got to the stage of the work interrupting customers, we shifted across the road to the Petone Central School Hall which was fenced off from the school. We had an entire winter there. It was a cold one too! Maybe you can remember that time. Roy (my husband) was the Principal of the school at that time.

There were more changes ahead. In 1987 the government separated us to telecom; postbank and N.Z.Post. We were asked to apply for which ever branch we preferred. I chose N.Z.Post. Now postbank has been absorbed into A.N.Z. Bank.

Later the Post Office became a post shop and there has been tinkering with the system ever since.

I had the opportunity to retire early in 1989 and took it. There was little rest however as I became a casual employee and have been working most of the time ever since. Perhaps I have had about 5 retirements. I later worked occasionally at Petone and also Te Puni which is managed by Petone, and also at Naenae where I met up with many old Petone customers who have shifted north .

Changes continue to take place and in 2001 we again started issuing money orders from Petone and there was a change in parcels.

I turned seventy that year and finally had to retire for good. My time at Petone from 1946 until 2001 with a number of breaks was a most enjoyable experience

### Joan Hewson



Joan at her farewell lunch by staff at Petone Post Office.



The original Post Office in Petone which was demolished and rebuilt in 1935. The next Post Office built on the same site became the ANZ bank and now lies empty.