

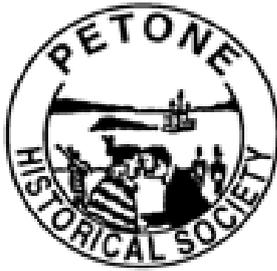


# PETONE HISTORICAL SOCIETY inc.

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## Chronicle June 2014



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Welcome to the Petone Historical Society June Chronicle.

We have had a busy time over the last couple of months. The major emphasis has been on the submissions to Hutt City Council's Annual Plan and especially the submission on the proposed Petone Arena. Our objection to the Arena was based on the historical importance of the Petone Recreation Ground in the history of Petone. It is a major part of our village and has seen many historical events. Among these was its use as the first harness racing track in the Wellington area which lasted up to 1919. It was also the site for much of the celebrations for the 1939/40 centennial and also the Petone Borough Council centennial. Many of the ladies national marching competitions were held there. It was the site of the famous Bos Murphy championship boxing match against Vince Calteau and also his battles with Vic Patrick and later the controversial fight against Willie Jones. It has been lauded as one of the historic rugby venues in New Zealand and has witnessed some great games. I do not think any other ground has seen the Great Canterbury Fullback Fergie McCormick; the 1949 Springbok kicker Okey Geffin and Petone and New Zealand fullback Bob Scott kicking goals together dressed in Petone Rugby Jerseys. The Petone Fire Brigade held some of its most important tournaments on the Petone Rec. and the New Zealand invitational Masters Sevens team played one of the first major sevens matches on the Petone number one ground. As a sporting venue it holds a pride of place in New Zealand. But above all it is Petone's village green and thousands of children have played and learned sport on the Petone Rec. It is a far too valuable a ground to be taken over by an outside team at the expense of our local sport.

The other part of our submission was on the proposal to allow two/three or even four storey apartments building to be built as of right along the Jackson Street village shopping precinct from Cuba Street west. We believe that our shopping village is an important heritage area and also an attraction for the many visitors from all around New Zealand as well as overseas because

Fergie McCormick, Okey Geffin and Bob Scott kick goals on Petone REC



of its character and history. It is a tourist attraction and should be treated as such

We have also taken advantage of the opportunity to apply for funds from the HCC Heritage grant. We have asked for funds to publish our Book on 20<sup>th</sup> Century Memories of Petone and also money to reprint our Discover Petone Pamphlet which has already distributed over 10,000 copies to visitors. We are due to hear if we have our application granted on 12 June. We are very hopeful.

With the Jackson Street programme we have replaced the lights in the Jail Museum and installed another power point so we can install a TV which will run continuous loops about aspects of Petone history.. Two more information/ exhibitions. - one on August Liebezeit and his business and the other on Odlin's Timber Yard - are completed and will be in place shortly. Our small museum is growing slowly but steadily.

### **Evening Meetings.**

**We** have now held two of our four proposed evening get togethers with Lower Hutt Historical Society. The first was in Petone last March where Clark Stiles spoke to us on accessing archives. The second was on Friday 9th of May at "The Anchorage" in High Street Lower Hutt. We had an excellent presentation by Dr Cornel de Ronde on the Pink and White terraces and the effects of the 1886 eruption that are being explored in Lake Tarawera. The next meeting will be again hosted by Lower Hutt, on Friday July 11<sup>th</sup>. No venue as yet but I expect it to be again at the Anchorage. With the closure of the administration building few halls are available. Petone will be hosting the last combined meeting on Thursday 21 August. September will be our Heritage month and a programme will be sent to you by August. It is also propose to hold another Cinema event in November if enough people are willing to attend

### **Wellington City and Sea Museum.**

I was invited along with Joanna Newman from Mt Cook, and Judith Burch from Karori and Don Picken from WRHPC to a meeting with Paul Thompson Manager Wellington City and sea museum and Brent Fafeita to discuss the new direction for their museum. It is rated one of the top 50 museums in the world so I was told. They showed us the new spaces they have available. These are two more floors above the present museum. Both at the stage of being cleared. At the meeting Paul talked about their desire to become a true regional museum featuring displays about items of interest throughout the Wellington Region. He wants to work in partnership with all the local museums and offered the services of their expertise both in display and research. We suggested the best way for him to get his ideas out to the various parts of the region was for him to visit them and talk to the people involved.

### **Wellington Region Heritage Promotion Council**

We had a meeting at the National Library in Molesworth Street on 19<sup>th</sup> February and set the framework for Heritage month which will again be in September. Representatives of groups from all over the region attended. There is no special theme. Lack of money may mean that advertising will be mainly by the website although local historical societies can reproduce the calendar for the local community. It will be in the WRHPC Newsletter. A further meeting was held at the National Library on May 21<sup>st</sup>. This was to talk with groups to hear what they have planned so far. Many have WW1 projects. We will not be doing that this year but will next year. We would like copies of photos and stories people have about their own family members from Petone sent to us so we can mount a display next year. This year we will have Walk of Champions ceremony on Sept 13<sup>th</sup> and also a bus trip around Petone and some walking tours as part of Petone hosting of small towns.

## **.New Books**

The book “Restless Engineer – The George Smithies Saga” is now available and on display at Petone Settlers’ Museum, telling the story of the gas engineer who brought new life to then unattractive, smelly Petone, between 1898 and 1901, adding the roles of Town Clerk and Borough Engineer to his achievements. There are historical stories about the development of Petone, then Wanganui, through to 1908, based on the life and times of an enterprising gas and civil engineer. The web site referring to the book is accessible in Google, by typing in the words “restless engineer smithies” or otherwise <http://smithies.kiwi.nz>

As gas engineer, George Smithies was responsible for the design and erection of Petone’s gasworks, to bring gas lighting, cooking and heating to the area. In May 1900 the new gasworks were opened, and under George’s hand as Town Clerk an advertisement appeared in the Evening Post for the supply of gas fittings. George was also responsible for answering criticism of Petone’s sadly lacking water supply and consequent sanitation services, in light of the reluctance of the ratepayers to increase their rates to pay for the services required. A major fire which raged out of control, due to lack of sufficient water supply, swung the vote.

New photographs. We were given a couple of copies of photos showing the opening of Percy’s gardens in 1949. They have been scanned and one is reproduced below.

Copies of “Restless Engineer- The George Smithies Saga” can be seen at the Petone Settlers Museum, available there for \$35, also at Unity Books (Wellington) Ltd, or directly from the author via her email address – doreencnz@yahoo.com.

## **OPENING OF PERCY GARDENS BY HON.SIR WALTER NASH 1949**



This picture was taken at the opening of Percy's Gardens in 1949. A large crowd assembled and Walter Nash our local Member of Parliament is shown (bottom right) speaking to the crowd. The gardens were gifted to Petone by the Percy family. The Old Mill where we used to play as children was burnt down just a few years before.

## **A major discussion throughout New Zealand is should the Government legislate to have fluoride in all water supplies. Here is a little piece on the history of Petone Water Supply**

.One of the biggest problems in the early days of Petone Settlement was the inability to put out fires because of a lack of pressure water supply. Most people in Petone had their own artesian well and were loath to pass a request by the local council to spend money by raising a loan to get a water supply. But the fledgling town was beginning to grow rapidly and fires were becoming a serious problem

It took a number of years and a growing number of major fires, before people realised the need for a pressure supply of water . But where would it come from?

Council had been negotiating with Wellington City Council to get them attached to their Wainuiomata Supply but it was not very convenient or suitable. A further source was Belmont's Speedy Creek. They had been negotiating for some time with the owners and had just about completed their negotiations when Lower Hutt Council secretly bought up the Speedy Creek water supply. The position between the two councils soured and this coolness lasted for a number of years.

A further source was the Korokoro Stream. There was a possibility. Difficulty in that Petone Woollen Company had obtained the water rights. After some negotiation the Petone Council was able to use the stream but there were some strong conditions. They had to build a lower dam for the woollen mills and also guarantee 1,000,000 gallon of water each year. This led to council having to use an upper dam on the Korokoro and pipe water down to Petone on a gravity feed.

Water from Korokoro served the borough quite well up to about 1964 when major bores were dug to tap the artesian supply. It had to be pumped around the town. Petone has been on artesian well supply since that date. One consequence was that all private artesian wells had to be plugged. This upset many villagers

Some years later a further problem came with the fluoridation argument where in some cases fluoride was being put into town supplies. The NZ Dental association recommended this process but many people did not like the thought of forced medication. Petone was especially vocal and persuaded The Hutt City Council to continue to supply Petone with unadulterated artesian supply at a cost of about \$400,000 I believe that the Petone Borough Councillor, Ron Marsden had sent water samples to France in the early 1970's and it was given an "A" rating for water quality. I have no evidence that this actually happened but I have been told the story many times. There have been many arguments around the country over the value of placing fluoride in town supply. The N.Z. dental Society and Medical board recommend this to improve dental health. There is some pressure to get Parliament to legislate to have fluoride in all water systems. There is a vocal group who oppose this and point out that fluoride builds up within the body and can affect the health of some people who may be allergic to it. They point out that people who want/need fluoride can use fluoride tablets or fluoride toothpaste. People should take personal responsibility .

In 2000 Petone built a non- fluoride water fountain using artesian supply on Buick Street/ Jackson Street corner as a millennium project. This has proved to be immensely popular and there are always people from outside the borough filling their containers with pure Petone Water. Strangely many Petone people also use it although they have the artesian supply in their home water supply. Recently Hutt City Council have provided a similar fountain across from their administration building and are planning two more around the city according to this year's annual plan.

**HAVE YOU PAID YOUR 2014 SUB YET. IT IS OUR MAJOR SOURCE OF REVENUE ?**