

Bellevue Gardens.



The main driveway of the Bellevue Gardens, Lower Hutt, 1904. Photo by Schaeff, Sarony Studios. *New Zealand Graphic* of 17 December 1904. Sir George Grey Special Collection. Auckland Libraries.

Located on what is now Woburn Road Bellevue Gardens were laid out about 1852 by Arthur Ludlam. Originally they were known as Ludlam's Gardens. Ludlam had owned the property since 1840. In 1877 his estate consisted of 10 acres of pleasure gardens, 8 acres of orchard, and 17 acres of lawns. A wide drive (pictured) lined with camellias and hydrangeas, backed with darker leaved natives, swept up to the double storied house. There were 8,000 plants and three tons of bulbs growing on the estate. Ludlam had collected plants and shrubs and trees from all over the country, as well as from Australia, China, the Himalayas, and Europe. On his death in 1877 the property was bought by James McNab who promoted the pleasure gardens extensively so much so that a trip to McNab's became part of the social scene of Wellington. In 1896 the Gardens were sold to Mrs Ross who further developed it adding caged animals, horses and boats for hire. The house was extended to cope with weddings, picnics and other functions. The visitor book was soon filled with the names of key political figures. It was a golden age. Three gardeners kept the place spotless. Special trains were run on Sundays to the Hutt to cater for the crowds. In 1898 the property was badly damaged by flooding and Mrs Ross sold her interest in 1900. The new owners (Lodder and Orr) named the gardens *Bellevue* and turned the house into a licenced hotel. Five years later with property values rapidly rising in the Hutt there was pressure to cut up the land for housing. An attempt was made to sell the *Bellevue* as one lot in 1905 : this failed and then it was proposed that just the pleasure garden was sold. This caused an uproar and it was demanded that the Government buy *Bellevue*. The Government was unmoved. Another suggestion that local bodies buy the estate : this got nowhere. After that some sections were sold off: the greater part was cut up for housing in 1923. Even so the area does still retain today the ambiance of the past with its large trees, stately homes and large private gardens. (Sources: David Millar, "Once upon a village", 1972. Warwick Johnston, "Woburn: Te Umumamaku", 2002.) [By G.D.]