Welcome to the August / September edition of Chronicle. Sorry it is a few days late. But it has been a relatively quiet time for the Society.

The Major happening in July was our meeting at the Settlers Museum on Monday 11th July, Jen Bolland of the Dowse who is one of the people responsible for the Settlers gave a very good talk on the refurbishment of the museum. We then had a tour around the new exhibits and the changes made to the building. The building now has a south landscape window about where the original door was. It provides a stunning view of the harbour. Also notable was the exposure of the original footbaths where people who used the “bathing sheds” could wash the sand off their feet. It brought back many pleasant memories. The exhibits shown were of a very good standard and everyone was advised that they would be changed frequently so that the museum would always be fresh. A great start for this historic building.

Other society points of interest.

1. The society secured funding for a reprint of the Discover Petone pamphlet which had been walking out the door as a tremendous rate.
2. The Book of Petone Memories “Sun Sand and Sweat” has sold out and a further reprint has been delivered and there was a very successful relaunch of the book at Alfred Memelink’s Art Space on Petone Esplanade on Friday 5th August. despite the bad weather. The Art Space is a bright and welcoming venue and for those who have not visited it lately there is always something new to see.
3. September is Heritage Month and as usual there will be whole lot of activity happening in Petone. The jail Museum is open most days and for those who have not visited and watched the videos of Petone it is well worth the time to go and have a look. Hopefully the displays will start rotating soon as new ones become available. There may be another bus tour of Petone on Sunday 25th of September starting from the community house in Britannia Street at 2 p.m. Cost is $10 each seat and it is important to let us have your bookings early before we run out of room. Ring Roy 5686449 or email petonehistories@gmail.com with your numbers so bring your friends. There is always something new to discover. The tour will last about 2 hours finishing at 4p.m.
4. The Jackson Street Programme is offering a number of activities including story boards on a number of Jackson Street Shops, a treasure hunt for children each Saturday in September and walking tours of Jackson.

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Street. There will be another three National sportspeople recognised by the laying of plaques in the footpath in Saturday Morning 10th September starting at the Baptist Church at 10.30 a.m. The three people to be honoured are Neemia Tialata a six year All Black who is still plying his trade in France; Hohn Adams N.Z. football and our first Black Fern Women’s Rugby Player Rochelle Martin who not only was player of the year in 1995 but went on to captain her country. Petone is delighted to recognise these three champions and this will make 240 recipients named on plaques set in Jackson Street’s footpath.

5. There will undoubtedly be other activities for September but these are not at hand as yet. I suggest that you look in the Wellington Region Heritage Council website to see what is happening throughout the month in the region

WHAT PETONE WILL BE LIKE IN 2040

Hutt City Council have set up a group to create a vision for Petone in 2040. We were given an impression of what this group of people have been doing and there will be more feedback opportunities in the future. There is no doubt that Petone will be different and some of the ideas may prove controversial

Answers to the quiz set last bulletin

Where was the first school in Petone in 1882?
Answer. Johnson’s Hall Hutt Road
When did Petone become a borough? Answer 1888
When was Britannia House established as a Home for the Elderly? Answer 1980 Its 36th

Britannia House’s Birthday is on Sunday 7th August

Approximately how much land was raised during the 1855 earthquake
Answer. About 6 feet

What was the first car factory built in Petone in 1926?
Answer; General Motors
A bonus point if you can name the car factory that was built at 35 Jackson Street in 1932. It only lasted one year because of the depression. Answer Rover Motor Company

When did George Gee become Mayor of Petone?
Answer 1968 George was the first Chinese Mayor in New Zealand

Who was our second Member of Parliament for Hutt after Sir Thomas Wilford?
Answer Walter Nash

Where was the gas works built in Petone?
Answer: Udy Street North side

What was the name of the lady from Buick Street, who was called the “Fireworks Lady” throughout New Zealand because of her campaign against fireworks?
Answer Beverley Pentland

When was the courthouse built in Petone? Answer 1913

If you want more questions let me know by email I would like to have some feedback on the Chronicle and what people would like to read about.

I thought some may like to know what school life was like in the 1930s and forties. This is what I can remember about my time at Petone Central School in Jackson Street Petone. That school is no longer there. There is now the residing place of the of the old Grand National Hotel which was shifted there and the Jackson Street Mews. The school is now in Britannia Street, which from 1940 was once the infant department. The school roll for most of my time at school was over four hundred. The town was full of factories and young families. WW2 was a difficult time with most men teachers away in the forces and rationing was a part of life. Petone Tech or Hutt Valley Memorial Technical College or Petone College has long been shut.
I was due to start primary school in October 1935 but because of a polio scare I along with many others had to delay the start until the beginning of 1936. I started at Petone Central School at the beginning of February 1936 and my last day at Central was in June 1988 – a period of 52 years. Much happened between those two dates. Petone Central School was in Jackson Street between King Street and Jackson Street. There was a main school close to Jackson Street and there was a bell tower in the front. The bell was rung at appropriate times during the day by bell monitors. Very important people. I hoped that I could do that one day. The infant school was behind the main school and separated by the asphalt playground. To the side of the infant block was the infamous dental clinic. On the other side was the special class. This was a separate school on Petone Central site where the kindergarten is situated today. They taught children with special needs and were separate from the main school.

The first day I was at school I was strapped for talking and then after lunch put into the next class as there was so many children arriving. I thought I had been promoted. Word study was an important part of learning to read and we had charts with times tables and word that had to be learnt. Reading aloud to the teacher was a main part of reading.

The first big change was when I was promoted to the big school and standard 1. Each morning we had an assembly in the main school corridor which was wide and as long as the school. There was a boy’s playground on the west side of the school and a girl’s playground on the east and the two never met. Each side had a play shed where we ate our lunch during wet weather. Many of us preferred to go home. My teacher in St1 was Miss Fleet, who later married Alec McFarlane who was a senior teacher at Petone Central and also the elected Petone Mayor. Little did I know that many years later when I became principal at Petone Central that Mrs McFarlane would be one of my favourite relief teachers.

The next year I went into St2 and my Teacher was a Miss Paul who enjoyed singing and one song I well remember was Danny Boy. I remember little about either St1 or St2 but I do remember My S3/4 year. My teacher was Miss Grant “Katie” behind her back. We did the usual things like arithmetic with pounds shillings and pence; WE began to write in ink for the first time. Pens with nibs that had to be dipped in our ink well that was in a slot on our desks and filled by a monitor from a large bottle of ink every morning. Reading from the monthly school journal that we all got a copy of and word study was still important as was printing and learning to write in cursive style. Lessons were very formal and consisted of reading writing and arithmetic with History from Our Nations Story a book we purchased from Miss Blackborns shop next door, There was a geography book as well and nature study. WE had Phys.Education three times a week from a prescribed programme.

WW2 had begun in 1939 and Miss Grant had us all taking the tissues from our daily ration of apples and folding them neatly. She also had a pet craft project where we took a piece of card and copied a poem and
then illustrated it. The results were placed on the wall. I remember having to visit the school when I was at Petone Tech to take a message to the headmaster. As I passed Katie’s room I saw to my horror one of my feeble art projects on the mantle above the classroom fireplace. What is more she saw me and called me in to the room and told all the pupils that the card was mine. I had never been so embarrassed.

In Form 1 my teacher was Mr Wood. Apart from the usual academic work he taught us lino cutting. Where we had a small square of lino and had to carve out a picture with a set of lino tools. Then this picture was inked and place on a piece of paper and so made a picture. When I became Principal of Dyer Street School Mr Wood was a neighbouring Principal at Boulcott School.

Next year was my final year at Petone Central. Our teacher was Mr Robertson who was a most respected teacher and we all enjoyed his class. We were puzzled that even when writing on the blackboard with his back to the class he could call out who was misbehaving or talking. Later we found that he had carefully angled a small mirror in the corner of the room and he could see what was going on.

Two principals we had were a Mr Sutton and later Mr Lopdell. He loved visiting the classroom and would recite poetry in a loud voice flying. But we got off work so enjoyed his visits.

In Form 2 I was made a prefect and a house captain. We went from room to room and took turns at selecting people for our house. I always chose the good sportspeople like Jim Blair and Bob Blair. We had a prefect’s meeting with Mr Lopdell in the staffroom and were supplied with cream cakes and biscuits as well as a drink while we talked about what our jobs were.

Sport was a big feature of our school life. We visited the McKenzie baths each day in February and had swimming lessons from Teachers College students. We had athletics and physical education classes regularly and had visits from physical education advisors. We also had inter school football and cricket.

The girls had an asphalt area on the east side of the school where they could play basketball or skip. There were two tennis courts at the back of the school on the eastern side of the play area. The boys and girls were separated

For the boys there was a large asphalt area at the back of the school usually covered with loose gravel. This was our football or cricket field. We played football with a tennis ball and bare feet on the gravel. Most of us had feet like leather but we still regularly stubbed our toes. Sometimes we played bar-the-door (Sometimes called barbedor) Our games were the best part of school and fiercely contested. In the right season we had marbles and little holes miraculously appeared all over the place. Or we had spinning top season and we all had our tops and string. A favourite pastime was to split each others tops. There were many creative ways of getting marbles. One way was to make a comic show out of a shoebox, dowling and cellophane. Comics were cut up and wound around the dowling from one side of the box to the other. It would cost one or two marbles to have a look.

I remember sitting up against the building having lunch one day in 1942, when all began to shake and we had a violent earthquake. Riding home from school on our bicycles had us carefully negotiating the cracks in the road.

After 1939 when war was underway we undertook many activities associated with that. Patriotic singing at assembly and raising the flag. Building air raid shelters and groups making camouflage nets and of course fighting the Germans at playtime. There was also rationing and we all had our ration books looked after by our parents. We had milk at playtime and an apple wrapped in tissue paper. We would listen to the Petone Tech Band and the army cadets from the school marching around the streets and ached to take part.

Leaving primary school I went to Petone Tech or Hutt Valley Memorial Technical School as it was correctly called. Four very happy years. I remember:

That is my primary school life in Petone as I remember it.