

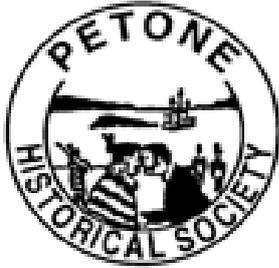


PETONE HISTORICAL SOCIETY inc.

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Chronicle October 2016



2016 Committee

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Greetings to all,

This will be the last Chronicle for 2016. I hope you have enjoyed the stories about Petone that we have written. We are always on the lookout for interesting anecdotes. Probably the most important happening of the Petone Historical Society's year was the launch of "Sun, Sand and Sweat" stories by residents about living in Petone. Barbara Scott made a great job of sifting through the hundred of stories that Petone people have sent in to the society over the past twenty years and the results have been excellent. The first printing was sold out and the book has been reprinted. If you missed out on the first edition give Barbara a ring or leave a message on petonehistories@gmail.com.

WANTED. Beryl Harris, one of our Committee members has asked if any ex Petone West pupils have any stories about their time there. Write them down and let her have them. She intends to write a book featuring stories about Petone West School before they are all forgotten. Contact Beryl on email berylaharris@xtra.co.nz

Heritage Month. Another September heritage month has passed. It has been unfortunate that the wet and windy weather may have made it difficult for people to get out but some happenings are worth mentioning.

- The refurbished Settlers Museum is proving a draw card and if you have not visited it recently it is well worthwhile having a look. It is free and very well set out.

- It would also be a good idea to visit the Old Jail Museum at the back of JSP office. There is a video of the history of Jackson Street that is worth watching as well as a number of display panels featuring some of Petone's history especially the Petone Police.

- Walk of Champions: there was another successful ceremony marking the laying of here more plaques in Jackson Street. That makes about 240 plaques that have been placed along the street. The new arrivals are Neemia Tialata All Black

2005 to 2010. Neema is at present playing in France but was delighted to receive a plaque. His family were able to attend. John Adams Football. John was selected in 1956 to play China. John brought his family over from Nelson to see him receive his plaque. The third recipient was special in that Rochelle Martin is the first Black Fern (NZ Women's Rugby) to be given a plaque. Rochelle played for Petone in 1995 and was selected as captain for the Black Ferns and was also their player of the year. Rochelle brought her family down from Auckland to the ceremony. She is a senior station Manager in the Auckland Fire Department. The first woman in NZ to gain this status. The ceremony was attended by about 60 people in total and all seemed to enjoy it

- The Gift of Green. This was the 24th anniversary of Keep Petone Beautiful Gift of Green where babies born to Petone families receive a free tree to plant in their garden. This year there were 26 babies and around fifty adults at the ceremony. Another great occasion. It is calculated that between 350 and 450 native trees have been given out over the past 24 years. If they have all grown, Petone should have a great environment.
- Petone Bus Tour: Around 30 people paid \$10 each to join our Heritage tour of Petone on Sunday 25th September. This year we saw not only many heritage sites but also those new developments that are changing the face of Petone especially in the western end of Petone. This year the amount of traffic around Petone seemed to be more than ever and it was difficult to manoeuvre the 40seater bus down some streets. It was the first time we had some people from Bob Scott Retirement Village. There are something like 400 seniors now living there, and more to come.
- The Jackson Street Programme have established a free app for Android featuring aspects of Petone history and spoken stories. This is available to download now. There will also be walking tours of Jackson Street taking place very soon.
- Keep Hutt Beautiful has completed 25 years of activity and this was celebrated on Tuesday 25th September at the Dowse. The main aim of the organisation is to eradicate litter and graffiti and enhance our environment. Keep Petone Beautiful was a foundation member and continues to support KHB. Keep Petone Beautiful began in 1988 before amalgamation.

Sport in Petone. Sport has played an important part in the history of Petone. Our Walk of Champions shows how many champions we have had. Roy Hewson has just completed a companion volume to his "Walk of Champions" book, which is called "The Cradle of Champions" - a phrase said to be coined in the 1920's by Sir Thomas Wilford, our first member of Parliament. The book outlines the early development of our many sporting clubs. Some 29 clubs are shown and how they became established. Today Petone is different, as can be seen by the reduced numbers of players. Much is due to our loss of the many labour intensive industries and also Petone College. How many people are aware of the Beach Railway which was a spur railway line along the beach to the river, taking patrons to the gallops at Hutt Park at the beginning of the 20th Century? Hopefully the book will be published before Christmas.

Jackson Street. With the many changes in property ownership and businesses in Jackson St, and inadequate Council enforcement, there is seen to be a need to help both property owners and businesses choose colours and signage which will enhance (rather than detract from) the heritage appearance of Jackson St. With the support of the Jackson Street Programme, the PHS is developing information for brochures which can be handed out to new businesses and building owners to encourage a revitalisation of the heritage character of the buildings when buildings are being painted or restored, or business owners are considering new signage.

CAR FACTORIES IN PETONE...

Petone is particularly well known for the number of car factories built there and the number of cars produced during the 1930-60. It has been said that four out of every five cars produced in NZ during this period came from Petone



In 1926 the **General Motors** plant was established in Petone between Bouverie Street and the railway line. This was important because the railway was an important transport link. General Motors was the first and most notable plant for assembling motor vehicles in New Zealand and it produced all manner of vehicles over the years from Chevrolets to Vauxhalls and Holdens. By 1936, just ten years later, over 37,000 vehicles had been produced.

During WW2 the plant was converted to produce munitions and during the following 6 years a host of products and by-products were produced to help the war effort.

In 1967 a new assembly plant was established in Trentham. The Petone plant was eventually closed down in 1984 and the Trentham plant was closed by 1990. The two plants had produced 593,945 vehicles between them.

Just after the war the plants had struggled to meet demand. There was a long waiting list to get a new vehicle. Some of the management of the Petone factory were allowed to buy a new car on the condition that they only sold it at a reasonable price after at least a year.

The same year that General Motors opened in 1926 the New Zealand Motor Bodies established their factory close to Petone Station. N.Z. Motor Bodies built bodies for buses and trucks and was another important industry in Petone. This plant operated for a number of years before a new plant was set up in Palmerston North and the Petone plant closed.

In 1932 **The Rover Company** in England decided that they would establish an overseas company in New Zealand and a New Zealand franchise was set up in February 1932. This was the first one

anywhere in the British Empire for British Cars. The plant was built at 35 Jackson Street and built Rover 10 vehicles. Unfortunately this was the middle of the Great Depression and sales were very slow. The company closed after a year of operation.

The next car company to be set up in Petone was the **Todd Motor Industries** at the western end of Petone close to the Railway line. Its purpose was to assemble completely knocked down vehicles from Chrysler and Rootes. It was producing around 100,000 cars a year by 1964 and acquired the Mitsubishi franchise by 1970 but was sold to Mitsubishi in 1987 and the works shifted to Porirua.

The Ford Motor Company of New Zealand Limited also established an assembly plant at Seaview in 1936. The Ford motor company took over assembly a distribution from Colonial Motor Company and soon became a big player throughout New Zealand. During WW2 the company was taken over for the war effort and made munitions and Jeeps among other things. One feature was the Manpower Act and there were more women employed and also a number of Maori workers from Hawkes Bay. There was a Womens' Hostel in Waiwhetu which was home to a number of women employed in the car factories. After the war cars being made at Fords were Prefect; Falcon and Zephyrs.

Like other car factories Ford succumbed to imported vehicles and the factory was closed with a new plant being operated in Auckland



Ford Motor Company at Seaview established 1936

Austin Motors also had an assembly plant close to the Todd Motor factory and the Petone Railway line and was very active after WW2 in assembling Austin Cars.

It can be seen that all these car factories required a large amount of labour and Petone thrived just as it had with the Gear Meat, the Railway Workshops and the Wellington Woollen Mills in the early part of the 19th Century. Petone was an industrial centre and its young people had an easy task in finding work. It was not so easy to buy a house in Petone in the 1950's. Young people could not get a loan to buy an existing house in Petone and if they wanted a house they were forced to go to Wainuiomata or Upper Hutt where the sections were relatively cheap and workers could afford the mortgage to build.

Between 1970 and the early 1990s Petone stagnated and Jackson Street which was the barometer of how well the town was going was not very successful. The population had also dropped due to the industrial land expanding into residential areas. Long established shops closed and there was a feeling of decay. This lasted until people discovered our heritage value, which resulted in a series of actions which breathed new life into Jackson Street.

Combined Meeting – Petone Historical Society/Lower Hutt Historical Society

November 30th 2016, 7.30pm

Petone Library Meeting Room

(off Carpark between Britannia and Richmond Streets)

Speaker: Warwick Johnston, Historian

Subject: Lost Graves of the Hutt Valley

All Welcome