



MOUNT ALBERT HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.

Newsletter 7 • July 2008

PO BOX 77-002 MOUNT ALBERT AUCKLAND 1035 • PH: 09 846 4509 FAX: 09 846 4509

Ack-Ack in Mt Albert

Alice Wylie has prompted this review of 'ack-ack' or anti-aircraft guns positioned in Mt Albert during the Second World War. She is, of course, referring to the gun emplacements found in what is now the Chamberlain Park Public Golf Course. If you enter the golf course from Linwood Avenue, to the left of the drive before you reach the car park, you can see the remains of one of four gun emplacements.

In 1942 Allied morale was low and Japan was considered a threat to Australia and New Zealand. The New Zealand government responded early in the same year by dramatically extending its anti-aircraft capacity in Auckland. The initial anti-aircraft battery on Mt Victoria of two mobile guns was developed into a brigade of 46 3.7 inch heavy gun emplacements and 36 Bofors quick firing 40 mm guns. (The brigade developed into a fighting unit with two regiments of artillery. The 15th Heavy Anti-Aircraft Regiment, commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel Elliot, was the one to which our local emplacements belonged.) The siting of the heavy guns was an urgent task and as they arrived from Britain they were placed in sets of four in Belmont, Bayswater, Northcote, Orakei, the Outer Domain, Epsom Showgrounds, Ponsonby, Chamberlain Park Mt Albert, Te Atatu, Hobsonville, and Whenuapai. In 1944, Auckland was able to be described as 'a first class defended port'. (1)

The Chamberlain Park emplacements were built in May 1942. In common with all of the others, four gun emplacements were positioned near each other. Each of the four guns was bolted to a concrete base ten feet thick. The concrete work for each set of emplacements cost ten thousand pounds (\$20,000) and each set of guns cost forty-eight thousand pounds (\$96,000). It has been estimated that the total cost of each gun site, including accommodation, came to one hundred and fifty thousand pounds (\$300,000). Mrs Margaret Pepper says that as a child she took morning tea to her father, Mr George Bowler, who was working on their construction in Chamberlain Park. (2) Mr Bowler described how the gun pits had been built hastily, out of panic and fear of Japanese occupation. He said 'I had two young daughters and a wife – believe you me, it was very worrying.' (3) (The Central Leader published a photograph of the then ninety- three year old George Bowler visiting the restored gun pit in 1998 when a commemorative plaque was unveiled.) (4)



A 3.5 anti-aircraft gun at Narrow Neck, North Head 1940. Apparently, similar to those installed in Mt Albert.
Photo supplied by Royce Nash to Alice Wylie.

MT ALBERT HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.

Each gun site was manned for twenty-four hours. Each gun, 'predictor', height finder and radar cabin had to have three reliefs as well as extra personnel for sickness and leave. One hundred and twenty people were required for each set of emplacements! A lot of qualified, or at least suitable, personnel were required almost over night. The sudden expansion was facilitated by two important decisions. The first was to 'import' expert 'ack-ack' staff from Britain and the second was to recruit women to operate the instruments on each site.

The local officers were surprised by the lack of 'spit and polish' demanded by the British Army experts. Sentries on gun sites were to pay no saluting compliments to these soldiers and the teaching of theory was frowned upon. And, a few months experience with women gunners soon convinced their male colleagues of their superiority in operating the delicate aids to accurate gunfire. (*No, I am not making that up, ask Major Blampied! Ed.*) The deft fingers of women quickly matched the dial needles with the ever-changing readings of the bearings of the plane being followed. Needle readings were transmitted to the men on the guns enabling them to set the weapons to the same bearings ready for open fire. Apparently, one British warrant officer who was inclined to correct mistakes by rapping a woman predictor gunner over the knuckles with his swagger cane, was surprised to be told by Colonel Elliot to desist or risk deportation ! (1)

Days were spent in endless practice. Whenever a plane came into sight it was identified and followed with instruments and guns by the watch on duty. In addition, the Air Force provided flights to meet specific training requirements. However, there were actually no hostile raids over Auckland. The only enemy plane (from a submarine) that flew over Auckland, escaped detection as its arrival coincided with the dismantling of Mt Victoria and the installation of the rest of the ack-ack brigade. Nevertheless, Auckland's immunity from the war was not guaranteed. If it had turned out differently, our city at one end of Britain's food supply line, would have been a logical target. Thousands of men and women melded themselves very quickly into an efficient fighting force and their job was very worth while.

Alice Wylie writes 'with the fear of Japanese invasion safely in the past the Auckland City Council bulldozed the four gun emplacements at Chamberlain Park underground. When the Mount Albert Council of the day became aware of this they advised A.C.C that two of the guns were in the Mount Albert Council area, and as the Mount Albert Council hadn't given permission for them to be bulldozed under, nor would have given permission, they required that one should be re-installed. This was accomplished and a ceremony held and a commemorative plaque was unveiled.'(2)

- 1) 'The Story of our Ack-Ack – The World War Two Defence of Auckland.' Major Martin Blampied. N.Z Permanent Force Old Comrades' Association. [Http://riv.co.nz/rnza/hist/auck](http://riv.co.nz/rnza/hist/auck)
- 2) 'Lest We Forget' reminiscence written by Alice Wylie. February 2008.
- 3) 'Veteran recalls wartime efforts.' Auckland Herald July 31st 1998. Supplied by Alice Wylie.
- 4) 'Threat of invasion remembered.' Central Leader August 5th 1998.

Rover Scouts and the gun emplacements.

*A chance meeting with **Bob Cooper** lead to his writing the following story about his involvement with the Rover Scouts who used one of the emplacements as a headquarters.*

I was delighted with our new home (*Bob had recently emigrated from the U.K*) and one day climbed upon a huge rock in the garden, and beheld the vista of the Waitakere Ranges from end to end. I spent a good deal of my time exploring the local territory, and soon discovered there were four gun emplacements just beyond our local trees. These were large anti-aircraft gun emplacements each surrounded by ammunition lockers and two small rooms.

I was invited to join the First St Luke's Rover Scout Crew. The Crew had been looking for premises for a meeting place, and applied to the Defence Department, for the use of one of the gun emplacements. In 1951, we were granted a 99 year lease of the 2 acre property, conditional upon our keeping the weeds down because of the fire hazard. Each gun-pit had 2 accommodation rooms opposite each other and six ammunition lockers spread round the pit. Both lockers and

rooms had heavy steel doors. The pit we chose, had slightly larger rooms each with six ventilator pipes, three a side. We cleaned the place up, removing grass that had flourished down the ventilator pipes, furnishing the room with various home made chairs, and a very small billiard table. We then had a public Opening Day shown in the photos. Notice that a flagpole has replaced the AA Gun. The MP for Mt Albert, Warren Freer is seen cutting the ribbon.



Opening of new scouts H.Q

Bob has kindly donated the Rover Scouts logbook to the M.A.H.S. making it the first formally archived artefact in our collection!

M.A.H.S Dates To Remember

17th August (Sunday) 2pm. M.A.H.S. Annual General Meeting. Alberton House 100 Mt Albert Rd, Mt Albert.. Business followed by short talk by Auckland City Librarian, David Verran, who will discuss how the City Library can support the aims of M.A.H.S. A 'pretty cups' afternoon tea.

12th October (Sunday) 10.30am to 4pm. A great day out! Bus leaves from Mt Albert War Memorial Hall and takes scenic route passing Kerr Taylor estates in Waimaku. First stop is at historic Helensville Cemetary. Followed by a heritage walk finishing at 12.30. One hour lunch and chatting at railway café at end of the walk (or bring your own picnic if you prefer). Next, walk or bus to museum complex where we will spend two hours listening to talk, looking around and enjoying afternoon tea. Bus leaves at 3.30. Trip costs \$25 including bus fare, museum entry and afternoon tea. First in, first served! Phone Suzanne 846 6569 by 17th August (AGM) to reserve place on bus and for any other information.

5th December (Friday) 5pm. Christmas Cocktail Party. Alberton House. Drinks, nibbles, carol singing.

6th December (Saturday) Alberton Fete celebrating Alberton's 35th anniversary of being open to the public. Featuring M.A.H.S stall. (See request for produce below). All M.A.H.S members very welcome to attend and bring friends to enjoy occasion and sample pleasures from the stalls.

Please help us with produce for the M.A.H.S stall at the fete for Alberton's 35th. We are running a stall selling homemade preserves, chutneys, jams and fruit jellies 'like my mother used to make' to raise money for M.A.H.S. If you can whip up a batch of lemon curd or any of the above please do so. We would like the **unlabelled** jars full of preserves given to Mary Inomata, who will then weave her magic over them, by December 1st. Homemade craft items also welcome. Queries to Mary on 846 4509.

20th September – 5th October. Auckland Heritage Festival. Look for information in local press and Mt Albert Library.

M.A.H.S proudly announces the birth of its archiving process (3.2kg).

We have been working with archivist Mary Donald to produce a professional archive trail. This means that any papers and images received by M.A.H.S follows an acquisition process. If you wish to donate anything to M.A.H.S this process will be explained to you and you can be reassured that a paper trail will exist for any donation accepted. You will be given a written receipt for the initial gift and you can expect that your gift is numbered and written into an accession register. At present we have a locked cabinet in the Mt Albert Public Library in which to store acquisitions.

M.A.H.S is now able to accept Mt Albert memorabilia. If you have any club records, event programmes, club or school records, photographs, tram timetables or tickets..... please consider donating them to the M.A.H.S. Richie (846 0389) or Bob (845 2529) are happy to come and collect your collectables and discuss the new M.A.H.S. archiving protocols with you.

Sharpen your quills and click your bics again. We want your written memoirs too. Please put aside some time, start thinking back and write down your memories some of which we would like to publish while others will form part of our general historical record. Send to the Editor, M.A.H.S, P.O.Box 77-002, Mt Albert.

Historical Botox

Re: Local Walk 5.

Thanks to Bob Kinnear who has amended copy from the last newsletter. 'The late Captain Kirk' (of 4 Allendale Rd) is incorrect as Allan Kirk was a secondary school inspector. Bob suggests that number 6 Allendale Rd was built by the Sims family, there was no Entrican connection.

'Oh Ballast!'

Part Two: The story of the Mount Albert Ballast Pit Branch by Paul Dillicar

The cost of the rock loaded in wagons at the pit was just 1/7d (16 cents) a cubic yard in 1915 and the pit employed a gang of twelve men. The average annual output in the years from 1905 to 1918 was 25,000 cubic yards. In the decade from 31 March 1915 to 31 March 1925 the pit supplied 224,942 cubic yards, of which the NZR used some 196,344 yards; the Public Works Department 2,644 yards, and public authorities and private citizens used 25,954 yards. The demand through this period was spasmodic with only 1,320 yards crushed in 1920, but 42,720 yards were crushed in 1924. In that year a lot went into fill at Kingsland, when the level crossing alongside Page's Store was replaced by an overhead bridge at Kowhai School. The demand in the decade to 31 March 1918 was quite a lot higher at 324,000 cu yards, of which a greater percentage was used by the PWD in post-war road construction. The Mount Albert Borough Council implemented a scheme to ensure only bonafide local ratepayers could obtain scoria from the pit in a vain attempt to limit the impact on the mountain, but the NZR demand was almost ten times as great as that of the Council.

At the outset the line was worked by 'Fa' 0-6-0 T locomotives, with number 182 'Patchwork' being a regular, 'T' 2-8-0, mainly number 102 in particular, and Single-Fairlie 'R' class. Later the 'Wf' 2-6-4T class were employed, of which number 396 became the most infamous when it was involved in a spectacular runaway while working the pit on 9 June 1911. The accident happened just before 10.00am when 396 was drawing 18 hopper wagons and a brake van downhill from the quarry. Only six of the wagons were fitted with Westinghouse brakes, and another four wagons had their handbrakes engaged. As the train approached the New North Road level crossing with its load of 63 tonnes of scoria, it failed to respond to driver McPhail's efforts to slow down on the slippery 1 in 40 downhill track. Even throwing the locomotive into reverse achieved little, and though having safely negotiated the tight curve into the Mount Albert Station yard, the inevitable happened with five of eight 'M' wagons that were in the ballast siding near Woodward Road being demolished. 'Wf' 396 was derailed; none of the hopper wagons were derailed. The main line was blocked by debris for over four hours resulting in delayed and cancelled services and a 'please explain' to the crew, all of whom escaped injury. The *New Zealand Herald* of 10 June noted that such was the force of the derailment "at the spot where the collision occurred, the line was torn up in a remarkable fashion, one length of rail being bent into a perfectly symmetrical curve like the letter 'O'. The Inspector of Permanent Way, Mr J. Northcott was at the quarry at the time of the accident and made all speed to have the wreck attended!"

Even before this event, the maximum allowable loads were modest and were compensated for whenever some wagons on the train were not fitted with Westinghouse brakes. The 1917-18 North Island Working Timetable contained the following instruction "The load of trains working over the Mt Albert Ballast Pit incline must not exceed 150 tons, if no vehicles (van excepted) are equipped with Westinghouse brake. Vehicles with Westinghouse brake may be added to above but the load in such case must not exceed 200 tons. If all vehicles have Westinghouse brake in operation load of 240 tons may be taken over incline. Handbrakes on all wagons not fitted with Westinghouse brake must be securely pinned down. The speed of trains descending the incline must not exceed 6 miles per hour."

The 1 December 1900 Working Timetable noted "Orders for scoria and road metal were sent via the Traffic Inspector for the Pits at Mt Albert, Mt Eden (Gaol siding) and Mt Smart, with Station masters at Penrose, Mt. Eden and Avondale to advise the Traffic Inspector weekly of the number of trucks of scoria passing their respective stations to order of Traffic or Maintenance Department. Charges per wagon were:

	M	L	R
At Mount Albert	5/-	8/-	20/-
	plus royalty, screening and freight charge		

The royalty was: rough 3d per yard; medium 6d per yard and fine 1/- per yard but royalty was not to be charged to Government Departments, Public Bodies or to contractors carrying out road works, or when the scoria was required for ship's ballast. Screening was 6d per yard. M wagons were to carry 4.3 yards; L wagons 7 yards, and R wagons 17.3 yards.

Agitation to have the quarry closed, and so stop the despoliation of the volcanic cone gained strength as the suburb became home to more and more people. Those who had bought land and erected homes on the northern slopes of the mountain were particularly affected, even though the quarry was there first. They complained not only about the smell of the gas engine but the loud bangs it made, likened in one report to 'guns firing'. The crusher wasn't exactly quiet either! By 1915 the outcry was sufficiently organised that a public petition was presented to the Mount Albert Borough Council. Although it got support from the local body politicians, it had no effect on the Railways Department who responded that not only would ballast from any other source be more expensive, but the next nearest source was the pit at Mount Smart. They also said 'the railway

MT ALBERT HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.

between Penrose and Newmarket is so heavily trafficked that further trains would delay other more important services'. Even a petition to replace the gas engine with an electric one was turned down on the basis of cost.

The effect on the crater itself was severe.

The *New Zealand Herald* of 10 September 1918 in yet another attack noted "that if Government railways cut the whole mountain down, the principal charm of Mt. Albert Borough as a place of residence would be gone." It can't have had much impact on NZR for it wasn't until 3 September 1925, some seven years later, that the quarry closed, and then only to reopen again within twelve months! The Herald took up the campaign again the following year and on 17 October 1927 was bemoaning "Mount Albert has suffered mutilation of its symmetry." It wasn't that much later that the politicians and the Railways Department had had enough, and the decision to close the quarry was taken on 17 August 1928. Several months later the plant had been dismantled and sold, the line lifted as far back as Mount Albert Station back shunt, and the quarry outcrops made safe. Ironically, when the land on the mountain was to be gazetted in 1930 as being added to that already vested in the Mount Albert Domain Board, it was discovered that the 1879 proclamation supposedly making the land into a railway had in fact declared it to be for road works!



Part of Mt Albert panoramic view taken 3 September, 1920. Looking north from the eastern slope of Mt Albert across Mt Albert and Point Chevalier towards the Waitemata Harbour. Mt Albert Road (left to right across centre), Summit Drive (left of centre), railway leading to quarry (left to right across foreground).ID 4693.Photograph Collection. Auckland City Library.

The official date of completion of the lifting of the ballast pit line and closure of the quarry was 23 January 1929.

NZR District Engineer's Files now held by Archives NZ, reveal that the disposal of the land pertaining to the branch line was anything but straightforward. Although some parcels of land were sold to adjoining land-owners relatively quickly, a significant holding was much more difficult to quit and got the Railways Department off-side with the Mount Albert Borough Council. On more than one occasion the wrath of residents and the Noxious Weeds Inspector was incurred. In 1948 the Crown tried to sell an adjoining lot to a Mrs E E Ward of 17 Allendale Rd who responded 'I have sufficient land for my needs and could make no use of a strip of scoria, fennel and wandering Jew in any case!' The file was finally closed in the 1960s, with one of the last acts being the donation of the Mount Albert Signal Box, which controlled the junction, to the Museum of Transport and Technology at Western Springs. Until its decommissioning by CTC it still had out-of-use, interlocked levers for the branchline points.

The route is still discernible today. Starting at the Mount Albert Station and standing on New North Road, the two-storey shops at 980 New North Road are built over the right-of-way. The Allendale Pensioner Flats behind these shops are also built on the former line. By walking a few metres down each of the side streets off Mount Albert Road one can easily spot the tell-tale 'formation width' long driveways leading to the private residences. This is particularly so at 15a and 16a Allendale Rd, 1a and 2a Ferner Avenue, formerly called Belmont Avenue. The flat area on Toroa Terrace, traces of the 1:3 incline formation, and the archery club grounds in the crater floor are all legacies of this short but spectacular operation.

By the time the mountain was left in peace somewhere close to one million cubic yards of rock had been quarried, and the cone had been reduced in height from 148 metres to 135 metres.

Local Walk 6

A walk through the Alice Wylie Reserve with Alice Wylie.

One Sunday morning in February 2008 I received a phonecall from Alice Wylie. 'Have you got enough information for the next newsletter?' I explained that I probably had enough information considering the article I had just finished (with her assistance) on the 'Coronation Oaks'. 'Well' she said 'there is a lot more to be said about the reserve, how about we meet there this afternoon!' Duly summoned, I arrived to meet Alice. We sat chatting at one of the picnic tables and after a minute she produced a thermos of tea and some cherry muffins she had baked.

Before entering the reserve from New North Road pause to look at the stone wall. This wall has heritage protection according to the City Archives. It was probably erected by Cottingham Willis who built the original house on site. Many readers will remember his elegant two storey home as 'School House'.

Enter the reserve from New North Road via the old wooden gate. This old wooden gate was in place during the 'School House' years. It is suffering from rot and is in a fairly frail condition. Alice and I agreed that when time came to replace it, it should be with a replica gate rather than something merely expedient!

Walk along the central path. This path is lined with some of the original trees. On the right hand side for example is an olive and to the left of the path is a pohutukawa. There are also the remnants of a garden put in by Jack Clark. At the end of the path is a semicircular driveway. Looking to the left one can appreciate the planting design made by Jack Clark. He envisaged a 'miniature Eden Gardens' and as part of this put in azaleas at the driveway edge and backed them up with camelias, hibiscus and rhododendrons. The effect was, according to Alice, 'Quite something!' Following amalgamation, the Council planted natives behind the more floral exotics. Looking along the sweep of the driveway one can see that pukas and other natives have jostled with the Clark plants towering over them and pushing them forward.

Follow the semi-circular drive around from the left. Turn off to the left before reaching the School House plaque. Hopefully you have discovered the unmarked entrance to what was known as the 'Hibiscus Walk'. On the left hand side it is overshadowed by a tall *Pittosporum crassifolium*. On the day we were there a bright red hibiscus tenaciously fought for space within the native thicket about six metres above our heads. Following the short walk one comes across a few remaining hibiscus specimens (many were ground out by Auckland City Council), azaleas and other planting.

Return to the semicircular drive and walk along to the School House plaque. The original house was built by Cottingham Willis in the 1880s. It was sold to the Welfare

Department and used as an Industrial School which meant that it housed orphaned, neglected and destitute children. Finally, Mt Albert Grammar School bought it for their boarding house. The house was demolished in 1975 (Refer M.A.H.S newsletter 6 for photo of Industrial School)

Continue onto the Suffragettes Plaque. This was erected in 1993 and should have been placed next to the white suffragette camellia. This reserve gives recognition to the strength and endeavours of women in many ways. I asked Alice if she was a feminist. 'I am and I'm not!' she said emphatically. She felt strongly that the contributions of women were often not acknowledged, over looked or even diminished by their male peers (though this never happened to her in her Mt Albert City Council roles). She recounted her experience of going away to municipal conferences and always being given the worst accomodation next to parking lots or roads where trucks needed to apply air brakes throughout the night!

Looking over to the left there is a large magnolia whose growth had been severely stunted by a garage built right next to it. After much consultation it was agreed to leave the magnolia and remove the garage. The magnolia recovered from the insult and today is a beautiful specimen. Beyond this tree is an area of land between the path and boundary that was in asphalt when the reserve was taken over. It was probably the original tennis court.

Follow the driveway back to the mouth of the entrance path. To the left of the path one can see a lava flow that was covered with soil and planting by the Auckland City Council. This had been 'beautiful in itself' and representative of the geology of Mt Albert said Alice who laments the concealing of this natural feature.

Walk alongside the lava flow to the sculpture. This sculpture was erected in 1995 in recognition of the work of Mt Albert women in settling the area and raising families. Alice said 'In those days women didn't go out to work and a great many of them put their considerable intellect into doing things for the community' A steering committee of women was determined to honour the efforts of their predecessors and much discussion was had over the type of memorial. At one stage there had been the thought of having a memorial walk with plaques (like Eden Gardens) edging it. Alice liked the idea of a large low stone table similar to those found in Italy. However, the sculpture eventuated and money was raised through public subscription. The sculpture was cast on site by the artist Christine Hellyar.

Our Streets

Thanks to Mary Inomata who drew on personal memories and exhaustive research in the Auckland City Archives for this account of the streets of Elihu Shaw. These streets are Shaw Street, Collins Street, Ethel Street, Leslie Avenue and Kenneth Avenue.

As a teenager living in Shaw Street in the late 50s I had no idea that there was any connection between the names of the above streets. Trying to be a cool teen, I was just glad I didn't live in a street called Ethel!

Elihu Shaw came to Auckland in the 1840s driven out from Hokianga by Heke's war in the north according to Davenport's 'Street Names of Auckland' (1). He is mentioned by the Waitangi Tribunal in relation to old land claims in the Northern Kaipara. An area of land at Te Kopuru was ceded to the Crown in payment for a destructive raid on Forsaith's store in 1842. Elihu Shaw was the shopkeeper who gave evidence that a Maori skull had been found in the store and indicated that it had been taken from a nearby wahi tapu or sacred place. Outraged Maori destroyed the store 'All that was moveable had been carried away; doors and windows smashed; floors and partitions pulled to pieces. Only the house in which Shaw and his family lived was respected.' The block of land was taken in restitution for what had been taken or destroyed.

Soon after this incident Shaw bought 16 and a half acres in Auckland, acquiring more land as he prospered. The streets were named after his children; Kenneth, Leslie, Collin, Ethel and another given the family name, Shaw. It seems as though Elihu Shaw was an exemplary citizen signing a petition in the Daily Southern Cross for William Brown Esq to become Superintendent of the Province of Auckland in 1855. He signed the second submission in support of the formation of the Mt Albert District in 1866.

In 1907 Leslie Ave and Kenneth Ave were included in an approved subdivision for S.L. Hirst. The subdivision plan for **Kenneth Avenue** shows sections fully available for purchase on numbers 14 ,16 & 18. However, these have never been built on and are part of Gribblehirst Park. I am presuming the Mt Albert Borough purchased these for this park access. The properties were slower to be built on in Kenneth than Leslie and as a result there is a greater variety of style of house there than in Leslie Ave. Kenneth Ave has always been home to the Sandringham Kindergarten. I had always assumed it to have been a house that was converted but Auckland City Archives show that it was purpose built in the 1940s. This in turn was demolished and rebuilt in the 1990s. In 1921 Foster's Adhesive Kiln was on the corner section of Aroha and Kenneth (no's 38 & 40). This changed to the Edendale Case Timber yard in 1931 and continued in some form or another as a timber yard until the 1980s when townhouses were built.

Flooding was a major problem for both Leslie and Kenneth avenues in the early years.

"We need a ferry service not a tram service said one complainant." (2)

"A section with a nice water frontage is not properly appreciated by Kingsland residents another report said." (2)

"In winter a large area was flooded. The area below Leslie was the deepest. Boys made small craft with pieces of corrugated iron. The low lying properties on the other side of the road were often flooded in winter." (3)

The 1911 Auckland Directory notes dwellings on almost half of the 42 sections available in **Leslie Avenue**. By 1919, with one or two exceptions, all the sections had been built on, 90% of them transitional villas, as well as the Morningside Presbyterian Church at no 46. For Leslie Ave the poor drainage mentioned above wasn't the only problem. The contours of the road were so deep they exacerbated the bad drainage. The 1919 plan for cut and fill in Leslie Ave shows clearly just how bad the situation was. Fortunately and finally, the situation was resolved by both the cut and fill and a drainage loan obtained by the Mt Albert Borough Council over the next couple of years. These days no 42 is the Morningside Church of Christ and there is no Presbyterian church at 46. In 1919 the house numbers ran from no's 3-47 on the right hand side and 2 -46 on the left. I'm not sure what date the numbers from 27 on became light industrial but it already was so when I arrived in Leslie Ave in 1976.

In 1909 Shaw, Collins and part of Ethel (the remainder was still owned by Mrs Taylor) were part of a subdivision for a Mr McDonald (McDonald St, presumably named after the subdivider was also included in this).

MT ALBERT HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.

A Mr McDonald, gardener, was the only listing in the 1911 Auckland Directory for **Shaw Street**. By 1925 the majority of homes had been built in Shaw St. The right hand side i.e. 1-19 were all villas and this is the same today except that 23 is now a light industry site. **Collins Street** was first mentioned in 1915 as having three dwellings on the left hand side which later, as numbers came in, translated to numbers 4-12 by 1930. Today the numbers are 2, 6, 8, 10 and are all light industry. No 5 is the solitary residence in the street.

In the 1950s the rear of Lynn Laces factory stood at the bottom of Shaw and Collins streets. It's entry was on the lower level of McDonald Street. Previous to the factory being built *"The property between Shaw and McDonalds St up to the mid 1940's was covered with long grass, large pine trees at the Shaw Street end and willows on a soggy part of the property. In the centre was a large pit about 10 mtrs in diameter and 2.5 mtrs deep. It was a volcanic chalk pit (pure white) I have been told it was used in the early days for cosmetic manufacture."* (4) *"This pit would fill up with water after the water level at Cabbage St Swamp would reach a certain height. The water could be seen bubbling out of cracks in the rock. I also used this whiting as we called it, to clean spoons and forks."* (2) There was supposedly another chalk pit in Taylors Rd. (Speleologist Peter Crossley from Auckland University School of Geography has since mentioned that it is unlikely there are any chalk deposits in New Zealand. It was probably diatomaceous earth)

Ethel Street, like Shaw, Collins and Leslie, has been affected by ill conceived building zones. From no's 1 to 42 existed in 1932 though it is now all light industrial after no 26. Number 1 Ethel St is an early 1860s farmhouse which was listed on the Mt Albert City Council register of places of historical, architectural or community significance, albeit in the Councils lowest grading. It is not on the Auckland City Council's heritage register. It has survived in mutilated form and continues to look as dilapidated now as it did when I was a teenager, much to my sorrow. This is one house which I wish the Auckland City council would cherish. How many simple working class farmhouses do we have to spare in Mt Albert that we can afford to let this rot away? 1 Ethel Street is just as much, if not more than Alberton or Ferndale, a part of our heritage!

The shops that served all these streets are still there though not in the form they were in the 50s. I still remember the double bookshop, the hairdresser, the haberdashery, Mr Spooner the butcher on the corner of Shaw and Sandringham and the dairy next to him.

As I have written this story I have found more questions than answers.

What happened to the Morningside Presbyterian Church ?

Was Mr McDonald, gardener listed as the sole inhabitant of Shaw St in 1911, the same Mr McDonald who made the subdivision?

Was there another chalk pit in Taylors Road ?

When was the decision made by the Mt Albert Council to change the zoning from residential to light industry and were the residents consulted?

What other shops were in that block during the 50s ?

We'd love to hear from you, not only if you know the answers to my questions but any memories, records, photographs etc you have, of living in Morningside/ Sandringham.

References

- ¹ John Davenport, Street Names of Auckland
- ² Dick Scott, In Old Mt Albert
- ³ Joan Coles. Vol 1 Memories of Mt Albert
- ⁴ Colin Joseph Clark, Vol 2 Memories of Mt Albert