



Mount Albert Historical Society Inc.

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PO BOX 77-002 MT ALBERT AUCKLAND 1350 • PH: 09 846 4509 • WWW.MTALBERTHISTORICALSOCIETY.ORG.NZ

The Missing Link: The Creation of St Lukes Rd Extension

On 17 March 1983, 1.2km of new road opened, linking New North Rd in Mt Albert with Great North Road at Western Springs. We know it as part of St Lukes Rd. It is the western end of the wide regional road that swings across suburban Auckland from Western Springs through Balmoral to Greenlane, linking the Northwestern Motorway with the Southern Motorway. Few of us know, or remember, what was here before. This article tells the story of these changes to Mt Albert. You may like to consult a current map as you read.

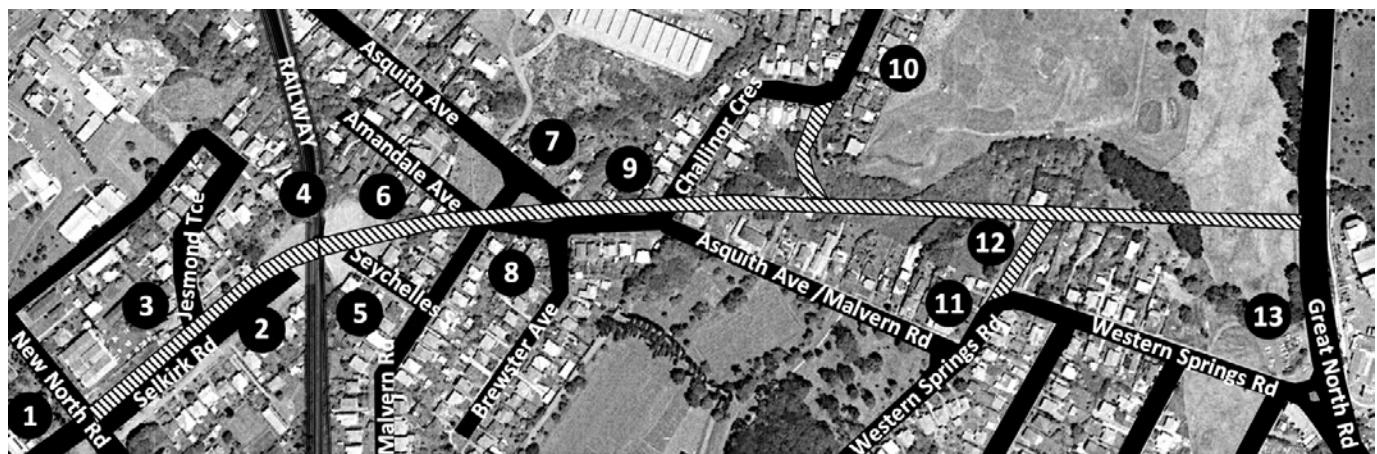
Before the new road

St Lukes Rd met New North Rd at a T-junction. Straight ahead, on the

corner of Selkirk Rd in the Braemar Building were a block of shops, including a dairy and takeaways. This was referred to by some as the St Lukes Shops. Selkirk Rd intersected New North Rd, and ended at the railway line. Jesmond Tce accessed New North Rd via Selkirk St.

Vehicles heading from Mt Albert towards the city had two options. They could drive down New North Rd through Kingsland, or take Asquith Ave to Great North Rd. It is this route that interests us. Asquith Ave was much longer than it is today. It continued in an almost straight line through a sweeping multi-road intersection near the

current Kings Plant Barn. This wide open space was described in a 1978 planning report as “the pleasant ‘village green.’” Asquith Ave then followed the western edge of Fowlds Park up the hill to join Western Springs Rd. There, a sharp left turn, then a hard right corner took the driver down Western Springs Rd which intersected Great North Rd opposite Stadium Rd (part of that old intersection can still be seen to the west of the Caltex Station opposite MOTAT). The ‘village green’ intersection joined Asquith Ave, Amandale Ave, Malvern Rd, Brewster Ave and Challinor Cres, which was a major access point to St Helen’s Hospital.



The route of the new road (photo taken 24 October 1980)

Work in progress on this date:

1. New North Rd/St Lukes Rd intersection. Shops have been demolished
2. Selkirk Rd. 9 even numbered houses demolished
3. Jesmond Tce intersection. 3 houses demolished
4. Embankment over railway being built
5. Seychelles St. 5 houses demolished at end

Work not yet started:

6. Amandale Ave. 3 houses will be demolished
7. Asquith Ave continues through ‘village green’ intersection up to 11. 4 houses will be demolished

8. Malvern Rd ends. This will be extended up to 11
9. Challinor Cres. 6 houses will be demolished and will become a short cul de sac
10. This part of Challinor Cres will be renamed Linwood Ave and will be extended to intersect with St Lukes Rd
11. Intersection of Asquith Ave (later Malvern Rd) and Western Springs Rd
12. Duncan McLean Link will be constructed here. 1 house will be demolished
13. Western Springs Rd intersects with Great North Rd

Photo: Detail from Survey Number SN5783A Run N Photo 11. Sourced from <http://retrolens.nz> and licensed by LINZ CC-BY 3.0

ARA planning

A series of transportation studies in the 1950s and 60s recommended an American-style focus on regional roads and motorways for Auckland. Auckland Regional Authority (ARA) was tasked with creating this cross-city regional road in 1966, and work started at the other end in September 1969. St Lukes Rd would be the final piece.

In 1971 St Lukes Rd Extension was consented by the National Roads Board (providing 75% of the funding) and by Local Authorities (primarily Mt Albert Borough Council but also Auckland City Council who were responsible for the Western Springs end). In February 1972 the official land requirement declaration was made and negotiations with potentially affected homeowners began.

Detailed planning began in 1977. The projected total construction cost was \$1.74 million (\$13 m. today). A narrower road width meant considerable cost saving. Safety came first.: no properties would have access directly off the new road, safe footpaths and a cycleway were integral elements, and attention would be paid to mitigating the noise and pollution impact on adjoining houses through plantings and landscaping. By March 1978 the ARA had acquired 67% of the required land and projected that the total cost of land acquisition would be \$1.35 million (\$10 m. today).

The in-depth *Alignment Selection Study* provided more detail and preferred options were identified. During March 1978 the ARA undertook systematic consultation with the affected community, distributing an informative booklet and holding a series of public consultation events. The plan was finalised by Christmas with some small adjustments. Access from St Lukes Rd to Jesmond Tce was

retained, the surface material was changed from chip seal to asphalt, and a commitment was given to ensuring that the sense of a pleasant green space which characterised the Asquith Ave intersection was not lost. Mt Albert Borough Council argued strongly for traffic lights to be installed at the Asquith Ave intersection, for the benefit of pedestrians and right turning traffic, but a zebra crossing was deemed sufficient. Although not all residents, or Councillors, agreed with the revised 1978 proposal, the benefit to the community was clear to see. The final design required 45% less land than had been identified in 1971.

Building St Lukes Rd

Work started on the New North Rd end in August 1979. The shops were demolished, as were all 9 even numbered houses on the western side of Selkirk Rd, and three on the corners of Jesmond Tce (#1-3). Selkirk Rd would be closed off with access only from St Lukes Rd.

A raised embankment was created to lift the road above the railway line. To enable this, 5 houses at the end of Seychelles St were demolished, halving its length (#3,5,6,7,9). Amandale Ave lost 3 houses (#2,4,6) where it had intersected with Malvern Rd, and its access was realigned to now come off Asquith Ave. On the other side of New North Rd, the intersection of St Lukes Rd was widened to align with the new extension.

Work began on the middle sector in 1981. Asquith Ave lost two houses between Kings Plant Barn and Challinor Cres (numbers uncertain), and two on the Malvern Rd side (most likely #156, 158). It was cut in two. The eastern section was renamed Malvern Rd, doubling the length of that street. Numbering was changed to continue the old Malvern Rd sequence (#95-107 Asquith Ave became #59-71

Malvern Rd, and #150-180 Asquith Ave became #54-82 Malvern Rd). Brewster Ave residents no longer had easy access to the through route.

St Lukes Rd between New North Rd and Asquith Ave was completed and opened to traffic in April 1982, without ceremony. The third sector was built 1982-3. Challinor Cres was significantly shortened at both ends and was no longer a main through road. The top part of the old Challinor Cres was added to Linwood Ave, which was extended to provide access to St Lukes Rd. 5 houses were demolished at the St Lukes Rd end of Challinor Cres, turning it into a short cul de sac (#1,1A,2,3,4). One house on the north-east corner of Challinor Cres was lost (#17) to extend Linwood Ave. All properties were renumbered in a confusing fashion, reversed in direction and switching the side of the road (#5-15 became #12-2, and #6-26 became #21-1) Those now part of Linwood Ave had a complete change of address (#23-41 Challinor Cres became #56-74 Linwood Ave).

Duncan Mclean Link was created as a short extension to Western Springs Rd. This resulted in the loss of one house (most likely #122).

Drainage, water and gas utilities were relocated and upgraded as the road was built. Temporary arrangements were made to ensure traffic was not too badly disrupted during the construction period. For 10 months, emergency access to St Helen's Hospital was maintained via an unsealed link between Asquith Ave and Challinor Cres. Landscaping and planting was undertaken by the ARA Parks Department in association with the Mt Albert Borough/City Council.

Although the new road was called 'St Lukes Rd Extension' during the project, it was agreed that the name would be, simply, St Lukes Rd. Although no properties had access

from the new piece of road, it proved necessary to renumber properties along the old St Lukes Rd, from New North Rd to Morningside Drive (#2-40 became #12-52) and Wagener Place (#3-65 became #13-59). The new addresses came into use on 1 Feb 1983. Council provided new numbers for letterboxes and offered to help affix them.

The opening

The final section of the Greenlane-Balmoral-Mt Albert Regional Road was opened on 17 March 1983, and fittingly, the adjoining section of the

Northwestern Motorway was completed at the same time. The Regional Road project had taken 12.5 years to build, and there was just cause for celebration. After the opening ceremony, a formal reception was held at the Rocky Nook Bowling Club. Guests included ARA and Council officers. Mayors from all affected councils – Mt Albert, Auckland, Mt Eden and One Tree Hill - joined the ARA Chairman Lee Murdoch on the dais, Speeches were made by Murdoch, Mt Albert Mayor Frank Ryan, and

Gerry Beeson, Chairman of the ARA Works Committee.

Reflection

While researching this article I was struck by the common sense, care for communities, and lack of fuss that surrounded this project. Since 1983 we have all benefitted from the vision and hard work of the people who made this happen. Auckland's future will not be so reliant on cars, but St Lukes Rd will continue to be a major thoroughfare for us.

Lynley Stone

editor@mtalberthistoricalsociety.org.nz

MAHS EVENT REPORTS

MAHS Annual General Meeting 16 October 2022

We had a superb turnout of around 40 members at the Senior Citizen's Hall for our AGM. Our President, Mary Inomata, spoke of the challenges that the Society and community has faced during the Covid19 pandemic, and how much we enjoy meeting face to face. She warmly thanked Pam Mayes, who has stepped down from the Committee, and Judith Goldie, who is relinquishing the job of Treasurer after 15 years. New member Cathie Hutchinson was elected to the Committee. Dr Michael Bassett was presented with his Life Membership of the Society, which was awarded via Zoom at last year's AGM. Following the official business, our guest speaker Bill Hodge gave a fascinating presentation about his experience of New Zealand from 1972 onwards, reminding us and helping us to understand the decades we have lived through. Afternoon tea was served, and members enjoyed socialising.



Oakley Creek Walk 12 November 2022

On a warm spring Saturday morning, fourteen MAHS members were led on a guided walk along Te Auaunga, Oakley Creek by Wendy John, one of the founders of the Friends of Oakley Creek. Wendy has been dedicated for over nearly two decades to helping restore Te Auaunga to a more natural state. When she started work, the area and the creek itself were infested with weeds and rubbish. As we walked from the Phyllis Street entrance along the walkway in dappled sunlight, Wendy told us something of the history of the area, including pointing out an old farm road and scoria/gabion walls. The creek runs from Hillsborough to the Waitemata Harbour along the Great North Road. We admired the extent of native planting that has been achieved in this ongoing project, the size of some of the mature trees, the improved condition of the creek, and the peacefulness of this local treasure. It is a beautiful urban walkway, rescued from decline by Wendy and her hard-working team and well-loved by walkers, joggers, and nature lovers. We emerged into the Community Garden

in the grounds of UNITEC. For more information on Wendy and the extent of the work of Friends of Oakley Creek see: <https://roskilldevelopment.co.nz/news/meet-wendy-john-the-quiet-revolutionary/>

Cathie Hutchinson

MAHS EVENTS FOR DECEMBER 2022

MAHS CHRISTMAS GATHERING. Sunday 4 December 2pm. Senior Citizen's Hall, off Wairere Ave.

Please join us for a relaxed Members' event where we invite everybody to share stories of Christmases past, and Christmases spent in other countries. Afternoon tea will be provided.

We will be in touch very soon about our full programme of events for 2023.

CELEBRATING SCHOOL CENTENARIES

Kōwhai Intermediate School

Kōwhai Intermediate School was established in 1922, as the first “middle” or “junior high” school in New Zealand, based on the American model. The local community were not all in support of this move, but the vision of a place to support students in a more focused way during what were, for many, their final two years of education, was compelling.

Over Labour Weekend, Kōwhai celebrated its centenary, beginning with a special assembly on Wednesday where the guest of honour was 101 year old Mavis Lake, who was a student in the early 1930s. She was joined by the School’s youngest student to cut the ceremonial cake. All students were presented with a centenary badge at the assembly, and each classroom had their own birthday cake. On Friday past pupils toured the School and watched performances by current students, and there was a meet and greet evening session.

Saturday started with a pōwhiri, decade photos were taken, and a formal lunch was held at Eden Park. Many people returned to the School Hall on Sunday to catch up, and view old photos and memorabilia. Past and present students enjoyed spending time together



Centennial Book

100 years of Kōwhai, by Jade Reidy (author of *Not Just Passing Through: The Making of Mt Roskill*). This book is beautifully produced and very readable, and retails for \$25. To purchase a copy, email centenary@kowhai.school.nz. Other merchandise is also available.

ASB MAGS Farm donated

During the 1920s, there were plans to establish an agricultural college in New Lynn but the Great Depression put a stop to this. In 1932 the Auckland Institute of Horticulture in partnership with Mt Albert and Auckland Grammar Schools proposed that a model farm, attached to Mt Albert Grammar School, would be a cheaper way of achieving the aim of providing agricultural education. Influential members of the Auckland community were involved, and in 1933, following legislative approval, the Trustees of the Auckland Savings Bank paid £2000 to the Kerr Taylor family for the 20 acre (8.1 ha) farm that adjoined the School. On 1 May 1933, this farm was leased to the school for a token rental of what became \$1 pa. The farm is currently worth around \$150 million.

In October 2022, as part of the School’s centennial celebrations, the ASB formally gifted the farm to the MAGS Foundation with the requirement that it must remain as a farm, thereby guaranteeing access to agri-food and fibre education for future generations. Having a farm attached to an urban school has allowed students to explore a range of career options and practical applications of their studies in many ways. ASB’s decision to ensure the farm’s survival is an investment in the future of the country, and reinforces the desire of the Kerr Taylor sisters, back in 1933, to support agricultural education. The farm continues to be called ASB MAGS Farm.

Mt Albert Grammar School

Throughout 2022, MAGS has celebrated its centenary with a range of events, including a Centenary Week in September. Events included sports and performance events, the opening of the Centennial Walkway, an Art Show, School tours, reunion drinks, tree planting by Prof. Russell Stone and a current student, a special assembly, a Thanksgiving Service, a Golf Day, and a Centenary Dinner at Grand Millennium Hotel.

Centennial Book

Change and Tradition by Debbie Dunsford (author of *Mt Albert Then and Now*). This book is a fascinating read, full of photographs and life. Its primary focus is the last 25 years, as a companion to the 75th Anniversary book *Tradition and Change* (by Russell Stone and Neville McMillan). The key changes in this period include the transition from a boys-only school to a coeducational school which began in 1999, and a strong emphasis on community values within the school. Both *Change and Tradition*, and the earlier *Tradition and Change* are available for sale from the School for a very reasonable price. See this webpage for details of this and other products: <https://www.mags.school.nz/centenary-book-on-sale/>.



Debbie Dunsford signing a copy for Janet von Randow at the book launch. Photo used with permission of MAGS

MAHS congratulates both schools on reaching this significant milestone. The stories of our schools is a huge part of the story of our community. We think these books and other memorabilia would make superb Christmas gifts for people who have been associated with these schools.