



MOUNT ALBERT HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.

Issue 62 • April 2023

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What is a Hero? Mt Albert ANZAC Day Service 2023

Mary Inomata, president of the Mt Albert Historical Society, spoke at the 2023 ANZAC Day Ceremony at the Mt Albert Memorial Hall. This is the text of her speech.

Learning about heroes, researchers say, can inspire kids with reverence and awe – and motivate them to be heroic themselves. Heroes exemplify cherished values, display qualities we admire, show us how to overcome challenges – and call us to stand up for others. They help build a better world for us all.

So what is a hero? The dictionary defines "hero" as "a person of distinguished courage or ability, admired for his or her brave deeds and noble qualities." But there is not a single mould for a hero, nor is there a definite path to becoming one. We all have the ability to be heroic. Psychologists say it can be taught: it starts with helping out those around you.

First, it's performed in service to others in need.

Second, it's engaged in voluntarily. This is the case even in military contexts, as heroism remains an act that goes beyond something required by military duty.

Third, a heroic act is one performed with recognition of possible risks and costs, be they to one's physical health or personal reputation, in which the person is willing to accept anticipated sacrifice.

Finally, it is performed without external gain anticipated at the time of the act.

Simply put, then, the key to heroism is a concern for other people in need, and knowing that acts of heroism don't just arrive from truly exceptional people, but from people placed in the right circumstance, given the necessary tools to transform compassion into heroic action, and personal risk done without expectation of reward.

Our Mt Albert youths who rushed to join up in 1914 were not heroes when they went off to mother England to fight the Germans in a war. The boys thought they were on a jaunt, due to their faith and belief in the might of Britain; that the fighting would be over by Christmas and they had to get in before the fun was over. They were sightseers eager to experience a world that offered excitement instead of the boring lives they lived at home.

No, they were not heroes. But they became heroes with their facing of reality. They did not run away, no matter



what they wanted to do, but did what they had to, no matter the cost.

Some of those same men 20 years later faced the unthinkable again, either going themselves or sending the next generation away, knowing that many of them would not return, and this has continued to happen with major conflicts. What agony of spirit it would have been to those who had fought earlier believing they had made the world a safer place for their families for the future. Heroes again you see.

The parents, some of whom lost all their boys, the siblings, the wives left to bring up their children alone, often times in hardship, the children who would always suffer from the loss of their fathers and uncles, these people were heroes too.

And we must not forget the New Zealand men and women who volunteered as nurses and aids in both wars -they didn't have to go to war but they chose to give their help where needed without thinking of their own safety. Some of those didn't come home either.

What is the most important quality of a real-life hero? Having integrity and being honest is a final foundational characteristic of a hero. Someone who is admired or emulated, should demonstrate a strong moral compass and should be open and honest with those around them.

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We overuse the word and dilute what a hero really is, giving our children a false understanding of the word. Is someone a hero for doing a paid job which is not voluntary? Yes, if it encompasses the urge to serve others whatever the cost.

People often ask me what the point of history is, it is just what happened in the past, they say. I say history repeats itself constantly. It shows us how we got to where we are and we ignore its lessons at our peril.

Real heroes are all around us though they seem very few and far between these days, but the yearning for them is strong in us. Why else would people of all ages make heroes of comic book characters to the degree we do now?

So on this day when we honour our Mt Albert men and women of devastating wars that keep changing the world let us also say thanks to the heroes of today, and determine that we will educate our children to understand what history continually teaches us - that real heroes are everyday people of empathy and courage and NOT the comic book fictional characters they see on the screen.

If you would like to watch the full livestream of the 2023 Mt Albert ANZAC Day service, it can be found at <https://www.watchteddy.com/anzac-mtalbert>. Mary's speech begins at 19:12.

Mt Albert 100 Years Ago: Feb-Apr 1923

- St Mary's Scout Troop tramped from Mt Albert to Bethells Beach for a camp – that's some walk!
- The brand new Kosie Theatre was opened in Mt Albert by the Borough's Mayor. Mt Albert would never be the same.
- Residents voted to fund the building of the Kingsland rail overbridge. This would lead to a building boom in Edendale (Sandringham).
- A meeting was held in King George's Hall to form a Gymnastics Club for Mt Albert.
- A severe storm inundated the North Island. Almost 4 inches of rain fell over three days, and low lying parts of Edendale and Kingsland were severely flooded.
- Sections were for sale in the Linwood, Prince of Wales, Hillside, Maybeck and Mount Royal Estates. Edendale sections were being heavily promoted, due to the promise of tram access.
- *Correction: the last Newsletter included the startling statement that 12,000 of Auckland's 17,000 population lived in Mt Albert. Auckland's population was, of course, 170,000. Sorry!*

New Zealand History Federation Conference, Morrinsville (25 March)

Lynley Stone attended on behalf of MAHS. It was a valuable day, making connections with a range of other local history societies and hearing about their activities and experiences. It was particularly good to spend time with MAHS Members Lisa Truttman (NZHF President/Avondale-Waterview Historical Society) and Bruce Graham (NZ Fencible Society). Morrinsville Museum staff were wonderful hosts who shared how the Museum is working with schools to support the new history curriculum. MAHS is in a strong position compared with many other local history societies. Our membership numbers are healthy, we have regular meetings and events, and we are not faced with the financial and logistical challenges of maintaining a building we own that houses a large physical collection of artefacts. The day generated many ideas for future initiatives.

MAHS DATES TO REMEMBER FOR 2023

Masks are encouraged to protect our vulnerable members. All talks and meetings include a light afternoon tea.

Sunday 21 May. 2-4pm. Ferndale House. Historian Debbie Dunsford will talk about her experience researching and writing *Change and Tradition*, the Centennial History of Mt Albert Grammar School. Debbie gave this fascinating presentation to a very small group of MAHS Members via Zoom during lockdown, and we are excited to be able to offer it again in a face to face meeting.

Sunday 18 June. 2-4pm. Ferndale House. Chris Hagon will talk with us about his experience living and working in English heritage homes.

Sunday 20 August. 2-4pm. Ferndale House. Mt Albert Historical Society Annual General Meeting. Our guest speaker will be Rendell McIntosh, Manager of Alberton House, speaking on his early life.

IN MEMORIUM

Mt Albert has lost two exceptional women, both of whom were very dear to MAHS. We extend our deepest condolences to the families and friends of Alice and Marjorie at this sad time.

Alice Wylie QSM, JP (1924-2023)



Alice Wylie passed away on 23 February at the age of 99. Alice was Patron of the Mt Albert Historical Society from its inception in 2006, and she is sorely missed.

Alice grew up in Nelson, the youngest daughter of Garnet James Brent and Anne Hestor Browning. As a 12 year old Alice, with her mother, joined the National Party as founder members. She married Geoff Wylie in 1942 and had two daughters, before Geoff's Post Office career saw them transferred to Auckland. At the end of 1954 they purchased the bungalow in Vinter Tce that Alice lived in for the rest of her life. They joined the congregation of St Luke's Anglican Church, and later worshipped at St Martin's at St Chad's. Soon after they moved to Mt Albert, the Mayor's wife Clarice Anderson invited Alice to become involved in community activities, which she embraced with huge enthusiasm. Tragically, Geoff died in 1959. Alice found her purpose in public service, and in 1962 she was elected to the Mt Albert Borough Council.

Alice was an influential and respected figure in the National Party throughout her life, blazing a path for women to take mainstream leadership roles. She served on the Mt Albert Borough/City Council for 27 years (1962-1989), including three terms as Deputy Mayor of Mt Albert (1983-89) in the lead-up to amalgamation with Auckland. She had a profound influence on, and advocated for, Mt Albert and its residents. She was particularly passionate about protecting the heritage areas of the City, and on providing affordable, high quality pensioner housing. She served as Chair of the Auckland State Housing Allocation Committee, was a Justice of the Peace for many years, and held many other offices including being a Trustee of the ASB Bank. Mt Albert City Council recognised her staunch advocacy for the people of Mt Albert when they named Alice Wylie Reserve on the corner of Burch St and New North Road in her honour.

Marjorie Turner (1927-2023)

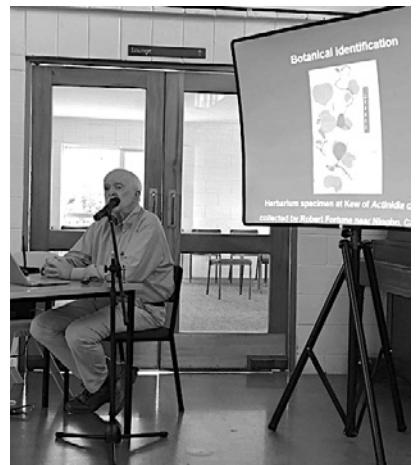
Marjorie Turner passed away on 19 April, a Mt Albert resident throughout her life. She was the only child of Charles Willis Coles and his second wife Prudence Louisa Freeman, growing up in a happy family home at 20 Alexis Ave with her three much older half siblings. She attended Gladstone Primary School before going on to Epsom Girls' Grammar and then Auckland University where she gained a BA in Geography. She married Arnold Turner in February 1950, and this year they celebrated their 73rd Wedding Anniversary.

Highly educated, musical, sporty, with a passion for learning and enormous energy she supported her husband's business and political careers, managed their home and family of four children, and was deeply involved in community activities. She had a profound Christian faith, and was an active member of the Mt Albert Baptist Church community throughout her life, with particular interest in missionary activities. She loved the outdoors, and she and Arnold travelled extensively and intrepidly. They lived in Allendale Rd during the 1950s, then purchased her parents' large house in Alexis Ave, and built a family bach at Huia. Later in her life, Marjorie had time to indulge her interest in local and family history. She and Arnold were founder members of the Mt Albert Historical Society, and have been dedicated supporters of the Society sharing information, research and memories with us.



MAHS PAST EVENT REPORTS

25 FEBRUARY: Ross Fergusson spoke on *From mihoutao to chinese gooseberry to kiwifruit*. About 35 members and friends gathered at the Senior Citizens' Hall in Wairere Ave. Ross held us spellbound with his talk on the history of kiwifruit, and the New Zealand (and international) kiwifruit industry.



26 MARCH: Neighbourhood walk: Wairere Ave, Burch St & Maybeck Rd with Mary Inomata & Lynley Stone. An intrepid group of walkers explored these three quite different streets, learning about history, hearing stories, and getting a sense of the lie of the land. Our experimental amplification system created some unexpected humour as people popped out of their houses to see what was going on. Rae Edgar described what it was like living in Burch St in the 1940s and 50s, and we were delighted to be invited inside her old house by

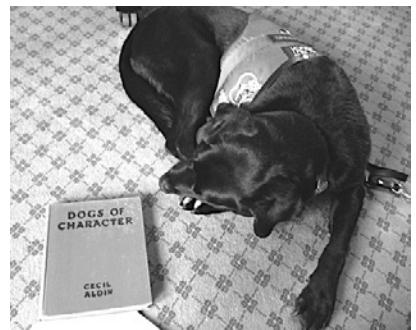
the very generous owner. In Maybeck Rd, Suzanne Good shared her memories and experience, and invited us to look around her garden and meet her dog. It was huge fun, and we look forward to doing more local walks.



2 APRIL: Memorial Service for Alice Wylie in Alice Wylie Reserve. About 40 friends, family members, and Mt Albert residents attended this open air celebration of Alice's life. The service began with piper Andrew Wilkie playing *Amazing Grace*. There was an open invitation for people to speak, and warm tributes were made by many of those present. Several of Alice's favourite songs were sung, including the New Zealand National Anthem. At the conclusion of the service, the piper played *Going Home*, as he retreated out of the Reserve and down Burch Street. This was a very emotional moment. We are grateful to everyone who participated in this special event, and thank Rendell McIntosh at Alberton for his support.



15 APRIL: Show and Tell: A Treasured Old Book. It was good to be able to meet together at Ferndale House again, after its lengthy closure for essential maintenance. Around 30 members (and Rocco the assistance dog) gathered and more than half had brought a book with them to talk about. All the talks were fascinating – thank you to everybody! Books included family histories, childhood favourites, cookbooks, and biographies of people whose stories brought back memories of one's own life.



Bruce Graham shares his family history book at the Show and Tell, while Rocco shows his character in literary style

Thanks to Sue Aitchison-Windeler for most of the Event photos.