



# MOUNT ALBERT HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.

Issue 64 • October 2023

WWW.MTALBERTHISTORICALSOCIETY.ORG.NZ • PH: 09 846 4509 • INFO@MTALBERTHISTORICALSOCIETY.ORG.NZ

## Ferndale and its Kindergarten

*Ferndale Kindergarten celebrated its 80th Anniversary on 29 October 2023. Guests explored the Kindergarten and Ferndale House and Park, where old photo albums and class photos were on display. There were speeches and singing, a raffle and bake sale table, face painting and a sausage sizzle, and of course, a luscious anniversary cake. MAHS was honoured to be invited to speak at this event, with President Lynley Stone providing a brief historical overview. This article is inspired by that speech, focusing on the official history of the Kindergarten and its occupation of Ferndale. Stories about the people of the Kindergarten are being collected and will be shared later.*

### Establishment of Mt Albert Kindergarten

During the 1920s and 30s, our rapidly growing suburb was full of young families. They had a range of child care options, including in-home care, day care groups, church-based groups, and a few private kindergartens.

A kindergarten provides a structured educational environment for pre-school children who attend regular sessions led by qualified teachers. The Auckland Kindergarten Association (AKA) opened their first free kindergarten in 1910. Parents were keen for their children to have access to quality local pre-school education. Across the city, communities worked hard to establish local AKA kindergartens.

During 1939 a group of Mt Albert women, including Mayoress Clarice Anderson who had run a private kindergarten from her home up to 1936, began planning to establish an AKA kindergarten. The outbreak of war in September delayed this project, but in February 1943 Mt Albert Kindergarten opened in the Schoolroom of St Margaret's Church in McLean St, with a full roll of forty children aged 3 and 4. It was AKA's 13th kindergarten, one of nine opened in Auckland during the War. St Margaret's would be its home for five years.

### Mt Albert Borough Council buys Ferndale

Ferndale, on the corner of New North Rd and Alexis Ave, was the family home of Jonathan Tonson and Anne Elizabeth Jane (known as Jane or Annie) Garlick. Originally called Fern Villa, built in 1865, it was renamed Ferndale in 1879, and was extended and remodeled in 1881. J.T. Garlick died in 1898, but Jane Garlick stayed in Ferndale until her death in 1947. Throughout their lives Ferndale and its grounds were generously opened to the Mt Albert Community for meetings, sports, group activities and events.

In December 1943 Mrs Garlick agreed to sell to the Council. The women of the community grabbed this opportunity, developing plans for Ferndale to become a facility for local mothers and children. It was ideal: in the heart of Mt Albert, it was on the tramline for easy access, was spacious and had attractive grounds.

It was clear that there was going to be a post-war baby boom, particularly as a new housing area at Owairaka was being developed, which would attract ex-service personnel. Current services were strained to the limit. The Plunket Nurse, who operated out of a back room in Bill Atwell's Chemist in the Mt Albert shopping area, was seeing an average of 500 babies a month. The Mt Albert Sub-Branch of the Plunket Society had been formed in October 1944, reflecting the high demand.

In March 1945, an 8 member deputation attended a Council meeting. They presented a robust plan for the use of Ferndale, with Plunket to occupy the right side, while the Kindergarten could use the left side during the day. Outside class hours, the left side could be hired by other community groups (which meant the Kindergarten would have to pack things away after each session). The Council accepted this proposal, and in November agreed to pay Mrs Garlick £4000 over 5 years, taking possession only after she died in April 1947, aged 99. Ferndale Park was formally opened by the Mayor, H.A. Anderson, in September 1947.

Considerable work was done to turn it into a functional public space. The annex at the rear of the house became a caretaker's flat. A conservatory and walls between bedrooms were demolished to create the Plunket rooms and a kitchen. The old kitchen at the rear of the house was divided to add an office, and toilet blocks were built. The original wall coverings were initially left in the Kindergarten's side, but in 1949 the walls were freshened up with pinex and new wallpaper.

In June 1948, Plunket was granted exclusive use of the rooms on the right for £1 a week; Mt Albert Kindergarten was given the two big rooms and kitchen for 5 mornings and 3 afternoons a week during term time for 17/6d. The Nursery Play Centre was permitted to use one of these rooms 1-2 afternoons: their focus was on a specialist play experience for very young children, able to be observed by psychologists, trainee supervisors and parents. A window was cut in the hall wall for this observation, to the right of the main door into the room.

# MT ALBERT HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.

The Kindergarten's move was the second major disruption for the year, as all schools were closed between 20 Nov 1947 and 19 April 1948 due to the polio epidemic. Stability followed though. Ferndale would be the Kindergarten's home for 36 years, and 75 years later they still operate from Ferndale Park.

Ferndale House again became a popular community venue. A wide range of meetings, dance lessons, classes and celebrations were held there. The hire cost was set at 15/- for the larger room and kitchen; 10/- for the smaller one, and 1/- for lighting.

## 36 Years in Ferndale

There was plenty of room for the children to play in Ferndale, and the beautiful gardens and large trees were an attractive outdoor space. The road frontages of Ferndale Park had no fences, but fortunately few children were 'runners.'

There have been many social changes since 1948, and Mt Albert has become a richer and more colourful environment. Educational methods have evolved, teachers have brought different styles and enthusiasms, and the children of Mt Albert Kindergarten have always benefitted from creative and energetic adults who formed their community. Fundraising has always been a core task for the Kindergarten, and there have been many large and small scale working bees and activities that linked the Kindergarten with the wider community.

## Building the New Kindergarten

Wear and tear was inevitable, and physical modifications were needed for the old house to be fit for purpose. Councillor Alice Wylie realised that Ferndale was not just any old house, but rather was a heritage property that needed gentler treatment. Consequently, in March 1975, Council gave the tenants notice that it wanted to change how Ferndale was used. It proposed to build a brand new kindergarten on another part of the Ferndale Park property, and to relocate Plunket.

From 1977, the Mt Albert Kindergarten Committee undertook intensive fundraising, including trikeathons, pet parades, fancy dress afternoons and cake stalls. The AKA was required to raise one fifth of the cost of the new building (\$12,000 of the \$60,000 costs), with the Government covering the rest. Although an architect was engaged in late 1978, the project became bogged down, first waiting for the land use status to change, then for the lease agreement to be finalised, which happened in January 1982. This was a stressful time for all, as high inflation threatened to erode the value of the money they had worked so hard to raise.

The new 158m<sup>2</sup> building included a playroom, staffroom, storage rooms, kitchen and toilet facilities. The flow of play between indoor and outdoor was much better for the children; it was warmer and had more light, and was easier for staff to supervise. Its colonial style was in keeping with the heritage style of Ferndale, with a verandah, weatherboards and a roofline designed

to blend in. Fraser, Thomas, Gunman, Shaw and Partners were the designers, and Vonk Construction Ltd was the builder. The total cost in 1983 had ballooned to \$106,000.

## 1984 A New Home and a New Name

Finally, in February 1984, nine years after the move was first proposed, the Kindergarten moved into their beautiful new home. Mt Albert Kindergarten officially changed its name to Ferndale Kindergarten, although it had, of course, been informally referred to as 'Ferndale Kindergarten' for many years because of its location.

Since 1984 there have been several rounds of refreshment of the Kindergarten's building and its grounds. In 2006 it was discovered that the soil on the site was contaminated, and it was temporarily closed for a major clean-up. This was a difficult time, as they lost established gardens and confidence was shaken. The source of the contamination was found to be topsoil brought onsite prior to the Kindergarten's construction in 1982, not landscaper's soil added more recently as was initially suspected. Two years later in 2008 the Kindergarten was back in strong heart, and celebrated their 65th anniversary, with Prime Minister Helen Clark giving a speech and planting a tree. MAHS Chair, Mary Inomata, spoke about the Kindergarten's history.

## What Happened to Ferndale House

In July 1988 the Council purchased the brick bungalow next door at 5 Alexis Ave, and Plunket moved there a few months later. Alice Wylie, by then Deputy Mayor, was delighted by the win:win solution. She told Susan Battye: "We kept the Kindergarten where it has always been, and we kept Plunket where it has always been, but we got the house back for community use."

The Council refurbished Ferndale after its tenants left, guided by local architectural historian John Stacpoole. In 1984, the kitchen was remodeled for catering, and dados and the hallway's dark wood finish were restored. Interior walls were re-gibbed and new heritage-patterned wallpaper was hung. Part of the roof was repaired. These repairs cost \$80,250. Further restoration after Plunket left was overseen by Sutherland Architects. This included re-piling the house as the foundations were found to be loose piles of scoria boulders. Outside, the barrel-vaulted portico façade was returned, based on a 1912 photo. In 2022, another round of restoration work closed Ferndale for six months.

Ferndale Kindergarten, formerly known as Mt Albert Kindergarten is still going strong. For almost all its life, it has been located in Ferndale Park, first in Ferndale House, and now in its own purpose-built space. The Kindergarten, Ferndale and the Mt Albert Community are inextricably intertwined.

**Has this article stirred your memories? Please share**  
Any format is fine – write something and give it to us; type it and send us an email; meet with one of us to share memories which can be recorded.

## Members of the 1945 Deputation to Mt Albert Council

Mrs L.C. Dawson. (President, Mt Albert Plunket Society)  
 Mr W. Atwell (Ratepayer and Businessman)  
 Mrs Pearson (Secretary, Mt Albert Plunket Society)  
 Mrs Wolfgram (Women's Institute)  
 Mrs Brockett (King George V Health Camp Organisation)  
 Mrs Boyle (League of Mothers)  
 Mrs Worrall (Community Sunshine Association & Residential Nursery)  
 Miss Doris Jenkin (Kindergarten)  
 Nurse Carmichael (Plunket Nurse for Mt Albert)

## Sources

Bailey, Christine. 2023. *Speech at Ferndale Kindergarten 80th*  
 Battye, Susan. 2011. *Research on history of Mt Albert*  
 Dunsford, Deborah. 2016. *Mt Albert then and now*.  
 Garlick, Royston. 1976. *Better rub than rust*.  
 Mace, Tania. 2016. *For the Children: A history of the Auckland Kindergarten Association 1908-2016*  
 Mt Albert Borough Council. 1945 13 March. *Minutes extract*.  
 Turner, Arnold. 2011. *Ferndale*  
 Yoffe, Susan. 2001. *Ferndale House History*  
 Discussions and private communication with Anne McKenzie, Judith Goldie, Janet von Randon, Mary Inomata, Don Bassett, David Jenkin, Christine Bailey, Robin Houkler, and several other people.  
 Newspaper articles accessed via *Papers Past*.

## A Birthplace Mystery Solved

Some years after I moved to Mt Albert I obtained a copy of my mother's birth certificate, and was surprised to find that she was born in Kingsland. This puzzled me, for as far as I knew, in 1906 her parents, John and Maree Quinlan, lived in Ellerslie.

On *Papers Past*, I found her birth notice from the *New Zealand Herald*, published on 10 September 1906, almost a month after her birth.

**QUINLAN.—On August 15, at Mrs. Torrens' Nursing Home, Kingsland, the wife of J. A. Quinlan, Ellerslie, of a daughter.**

With the information that her birthplace was Mrs. Torrens' Nursing Home in Kingsland, the next step was to find its street address using *Wise's New Zealand Post Office Directories*. The 1907 edition listed Mr J. Torrens as a resident of Kingsland Ave, and a few years later when street numbers were added, this was identified as number 10. A title search from LINZ confirmed that this was the correct house, and that street numbers had not changed since then.

My next question was why did my grandmother take delivery of her child in Kingsland rather than closer to her home? *Wise's* answered this too. Next door to the Torrens house, at number 12 Kingsland Ave, resided Mr Edward J. Drumm, Maree's third eldest brother. Ted and Annie Drumm were renting the

brand new Kingsland house from landlady Maria Kavanagh, and my guess is that it was convenient for Ted's younger sister to bring her 16 month old daughter, Nellie, to be looked after at their place during her confinement next door.



Numbers 10 (left) and 12 Kingsland Ave today.

As well as answering my family question, searching for my mother's birthplace has turned up another nursing home for the list on the MAHS website, *Maternity Homes in Mt Albert*. This is the only reference we have found in *Papers Past* to this nursing home. We would love to hear from any readers who know more about Agnes and John Torrens and their family.

Cathie Hutchinson

## Mary Inomata, our own Local Hero

In August, outgoing MAHS President Mary Inomata was recognised by the Albert Eden Local Board as a Local Hero for the volunteer work she has done for the community through her involvement in MAHS. She received a Volunteer Appreciation Certificate from the Board. Rendell McIntosh nominated her, saying:

*Mary was involved in helping establish the Mt Albert Historical Society in 2006. Since that time, she has been a tireless worker and advocate for the importance of promoting and protecting the heritage in Mt Albert. Mary has held the title of president for several years. She was heavily involved in helping compile the book on the suburb and also contributes articles for the organisation's newsletter. Mary has helped plan and organise the organisation's numerous functions and events over the years.*

This is the second Local Hero award that Mary has received: in 2014 she was recognised for her volunteer work in an award given by Anne Duncan Real Estate.

MAHS is delighted that Mary's work has been recognised with this award, and heartily join in thanking her for her leadership and her vision for our Society and its work to support the Mt Albert community.



## Arnold Turner (1926–2023)

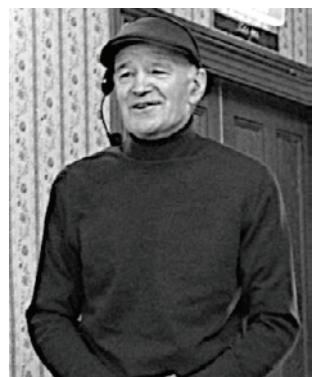


Arnold passed away on 1 July, just ten weeks after his beloved wife Marjorie, who we remembered in our July Newsletter. Arnold and Marjorie were founder members of MAHS, and we have benefitted greatly from their memories, research, participation and support. Arnold was well enough to share a Christmas story at last year's MAHS Christmas gathering, and we have drawn on his research for this month's feature article. We extend our sincerest condolences to the Turner family.

The eldest child of Ray and Mary Turner, and grandson of early Mt Albertians Edward and Maude Turner, Arnold was born in Sandringham, grew up in the South Island, and returned to Auckland in 1946 where he completed his legal education. He married Marjorie Coles in Mt Albert Baptist Church in 1950 and they were active members of the congregation throughout their lives. Arnold served for three terms on Mt Albert Borough Council 1953-62; the last two terms as Deputy Mayor. He then became the first Chair of the ARA Centennial Park and Regional Reserves Committee, responsible for the creation of our wonderful collection of regional parks. In 1970 he became Chair of the No 1 Town & Country Planning Appeal Board (later the Planning Tribunal, of which he became Principal Planning Judge). He was awarded a CMG in 1984, and retired in 1987 to become Chairman of the Bible College of New Zealand. A fuller profile of Arnold can be found in *MAHS Newsletter 22* (April 2013) on our website.

## MAHS Past Events Report

**20 AUGUST: MAHS AGM, Guest speaker Rendell McIntosh.** We had a strong turnout to our AGM at Ferndale House. We farewelled Judith Goldie from the Committee with enormous gratitude for her 15 years' work as Committee Member and Treasurer. Mary Inomata stood down from the role of President, and was heartily thanked for her energy and leadership throughout most of the Society's life. Lynley Stone was elected President, and Sue Aitchison-Windeler joined the Committee. The other Committee members for 2023-24 are Mary Inomata, Janet von Randow, Anna McGlashan, Anne and Eric McKenzie and Cathie Hutchinson.



Rendell shared the story of his life before becoming Manager of Alberton. He was a Canterbury boy, a 1974 Commonwealth Games athlete, and had a fascinating career in business. His energetic work in event management encompassed many significant events, creating memories that have defined us as New Zealanders. It is no surprise that Rendell facilitated the establishment of the Mt Albert Historical Society – we owe him a great deal.



**8 OCTOBER: Mike Wilcox spoke on The Urban Forest of Mt Albert.** Mike spoke to a packed house who drank up every word as he told us about Mt Albert's urban forest. He explained the pre-human and then pre-European treescape, and pointed to small glimpses of the ancient forests that still survive. We were introduced to a range of notable Mt Albert trees, and areas of special significance. Mike's talk raised our awareness of the trees around us, of their history and their lifecycles, their beauty and their frailty. He has written several books, including *Auckland's Remarkable Urban Forest* published in 2012 by the Auckland Botanical Society.

## Mt Albert 100 Years Ago: August to October 1923

- A woman was sent to gaol for a month for using obscene language in a shop in Mt Albert. It was her 54th appearance in court, and her language was considered to be "quite classical in its profanity."
- A resident counted 9 cars with canoodling couples parked up in dark spots on Mt Albert Rd in one evening. More street lights were called for.

## MAHS CHRISTMAS CRACKER GATHERING

**Sunday 26 November 2-4pm. Ferndale House.** The MAHS Christmas Cracker Gathering. This will be a fun celebration with comedy, readings, singing and dancing, followed by carols and a slap-up afternoon tea. All members and their guests are welcome. Please RSVP for catering purposes to [janetvonrandow@gmail.com](mailto:janetvonrandow@gmail.com)

*A gold coin donation is appreciated. Masks are encouraged to protect our vulnerable members.*