



MOUNT ALBERT HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.

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MURIEL HYACINTH KERR-TAYLOR (1887–1972)

A Tribute by her great-niece, Vivienne Wilson (nee Kerr-Taylor)

This is the text of a speech given on 22 May 2025 at the Kerr-Taylor Foundation Grants Award Ceremony

My name is Vivienne Wilson, nee Kerr-Taylor, and tonight I would like you all to remember and honour my dear great-aunt, Muriel Hyacinth Kerr-Taylor, born in 1887, who died in 1972. Owing to her generosity, Mount Albert residents are able to benefit from annual grants from the Kerr-Taylor Foundation.

She was the youngest daughter of Allan and Sophia Kerr-Taylor who built Alberton, and she was number nine in the family, which included the eldest, my grandfather Vincent, and Winifred, Mildred, Hector, Adeline Violet, Adeline Daisy and Thora Daisy (both having died at very young ages of childhood illnesses), Theodore, and Lancelot. Muriel's father Allan died suddenly of a brain haemorrhage when Muriel was only four years old, so support growing up came from her solo mother and her older siblings.

Her preferred activities did not follow in her sisters' pursuits of riding horses, art, painting, and music, but involved anything of a sporting nature, like her brothers. Muriel excelled at the new sport of tennis and won several Auckland titles. Her name still appears on the honours board of Mount Albert, Parnell and West End Tennis Clubs. Naturally, Alberton had one of the first private grass tennis courts, which was tar-sealed in the 1930s. Later in life Muriel became a playing member of Akarana Golf Club, and played there up until one month before her death at 86 years of age. She also enjoyed going to the races with her nephew Don.



Muriel driving. Her sister Mildred is second from left.

Like all of her family, she was a very honest person. When the three great aunts were living in Alberton, they each had their own routine jobs. Winifred always

controlled business and legal matters, Mildred gardened and looked after the two dogs, and Muriel cared for the poultry (hens, ducks, bantams, and peacocks), and always drove the car. They all shared the cooking. They had a weekly garden man named Leslie Thompson to do any heavy work in the garden.



Muriel with her nephew Colin, Viv and baby Vaughan Wilson 1971

Owing to Muriel being at least 18–20 years younger than her sisters, she was the 'fun' great-aunt (none of whom wanted to be referred to as Aunt. They were all called by their Christian names by family members across the generations). Each school holiday in the forties and fifties, my siblings, cousins and I came down from our family farms in Waimauku near Muriwai Beach to stay at Alberton where we got spoiled with generosity and kindness. Two things we loved to do was to have a midnight feast and to dress up as ghosts and go prowling the grounds late at night and to hide behind the hydrangea bushes up on Mount Albert Road to scare the people coming off the last trams. We would cackle loudly when people crossed the road to get away from us. Once Muriel played a trick on us and, dressed as a ghost herself, jumped out from behind a bush when we were going back to the house! She would also call "Coo-ee, Grammar Boys Ahoy" from the orchard when she saw the Grammar House boys heading across the lower paddocks

heading for our orchard. We would rush out to get buckets to fill with rotting plums to throw as a deterrent.

In 1970 Muriel was very upset when she overheard two DSIR men at her Golf Club saying that the DSIR was going to take her house and the rest of the land under the Public Works Act, as they had been doing for over 30 years. Knowing that my father Colin was involved in politics she rang him to see what she should do. My father contacted his best friend Sir Jack Scott, Attorney General, and he advised her to gift her property to the Historic Places Trust immediately so it could not be touched. She gifted it two years before she died.

On her death she also left a bequest to St Luke's Church hoping that living units could be built on land previously gifted by her family behind the church, for local

pensioners. This proved not to be viable so the Kerr-Taylor Foundation was set up to help local people and organisations.

The Kerr-Taylor family as a whole sincerely thank all the past and present members of the Foundation Board for their dedication and work in helping local people and continuing to keep Muriel Kerr-Taylor's legacy alive.

Credits:

MAHS is grateful to the Kerr-Taylor Foundation for permission to reproduce this speech, to Ani Wilson for the photo of Muriel, Colin, Viv and Vaughan, and to Rendell McIntosh, Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga for permission to include the car photo from the Alberton House Collection

XAH.B.25 <https://ehive.com/collections/3301/objects/74348/photograph-kerr-taylor-sisters>



Photo from Wilson family

VIVIENNE WILSON (nee KERR-TAYLOR)

4 April 1942–12 August 2025

Vivienne Wilson was a vibrant link to the Kerr-Taylor family, one of the most influential founding families of our area. She was active in both community and heritage organisations in Mt Albert: her support for Alberton, and for the community through the Kerr-Taylor Foundation and other activities, was generous and fulsome. She was a loyal MAHS Member, a regular attendee at our meetings, events, walks and picnics, an enthusiastic participant in our Show and Tell meetings, a writer of articles for our Newsletter, and a loved friend and family member. At our Meetings Viv was always there in the front row, beautifully dressed and smiling, and did all she could to encourage and support our Society. We miss her deeply, and share the sadness of her family and friends at this hard time.

MARY INOMATA LIFE MEMBERSHIP AWARD

At the MAHS AGM, Mary Inomata was awarded a Life Membership of the Society. This is the text of the citation that accompanied her award:

Mary Inomata joined the Mt Albert Historical Society's Committee shortly after the Society's inception in 2006, and took on the role of Secretary. That has been followed by 19 years (and counting) of service on the Committee, including two lengthy terms as Chairperson/President.

In 2011 she initiated the launch of the Society's first website and for about eight years researched and wrote the Society's regular *Newsletter*. Mary was an integral part of the drive for the publication of a new book on Mt Albert, which finally came to fruition in 2016 with the release of *Mt Albert Then and Now* by Deborah Dunsford.

During her second stint as MAHS President, Mary spoke at the 2023 ANZAC Day Ceremony at the Mt Albert Memorial Hall, her topic "What is a Hero?" She moved and inspired many people with that speech. In August 2023 she was recognised by the Albert Eden Local Board as a Local Hero herself, for her volunteer work through her involvement in MAHS.

Mary is a proud Mt Albert resident and has worked tirelessly to ensure that the history of Mt Albert is recorded and preserved. Over the years, she has actively engaged with Council on planning and feedback processes to ensure the character of Mt Albert was respected and considered in their decision making.

Mt Albert Historical Society has been the fortunate recipient of Mary's unwavering determination and energy for the Mt Albert community. She has led us, mentored us, inspired us and entertained us. We are delighted to honour her with Life Membership in recognition of the long standing contribution she has made to Mt Albert Historical Society.



Photo by Irene Wan

EPSOM & EDEN DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY UPDATE

After discussion at the Mt Albert Historical Society AGM, our Society formally offered to be caretaker for Epsom & Eden District Historical Society's collection, website and residual funds, and our offer has been accepted. We will be working with them over the next few months to support them in wrapping up, and transferring their assets. We are sorry that they have decided to close, and thank them for their confidence in us to ensure that their intellectual property and records are not lost.

EVENT REPORTS

Life Writing Workshop. Saturday 26 July 2025. Report by Janet von Randow.

This year booking Ferndale has become like a competition. The only available space in July was a Saturday morning the 26th. In despair I grabbed it and took it to the Committee. What could we do for a morning activity? The result was Lynley's offer to do something completely different, and run a Life Writing Workshop. There were 22 attendees, and the responses from them showed that it was a great success.

We each received the outline for the morning which kept us on track, on time and totally focussed. The detailed step-by-step guide led us through the path to thinking and creating written memories. The exercises in pairs were constructive and helpful as our minds whirred and old memories surfaced.

Those not new to life writing were enthusiastic: "The workshop was a refreshing motivator for me."; "I thought I had a fairly good idea about writing a narrative, but Lynley had prompts and hints I would never have thought of."; "I appreciated her emphasis on editing, which I wished I had realised when I wrote my story several years ago."

The newcomers waxed lyrical: "WOW! what a fantastic morning."; "it was an inspiring and exciting workshop."; "I learned a lot"; "Lynley's supportive guidance and the excellent informative handouts mean that each person can now make a start on life writing."; "I found the self-reflective questions very insightful. I also enjoyed Lynley's personal stories which illustrated the pleasures and perils of writing."

One of the group reported that on returning home she pulled out an old exercise book and began jotting down some memories: "Not grand plots, just little everyday childhood remembrances I thought mundane; but thinking of my youngest, device-obsessed, mildly autistic granddaughter, I realised how foreign and maybe unbelievable my early memories and escapades would seem to her — maybe worth jotting down."

Lynley's message was that all stories/memories are worth jotting down. Record people's personalities and interests, and note down *why* things happened. Many of us have wished that we had asked our grandparents, parents or older siblings about events in their lives. When we write about even mundane things, we leave knowledge of family and social history for our children and grandchildren.



Photo by Lynley Stone

We just have to start and write consistently — little and often. As another attendee said: "I would recommend anyone needing a kickstart to writing their life story to attend any reruns of this workshop."

I should not have worried about booking the Saturday morning slot. It turned out to be a stimulating and motivating event that we may just have to repeat in the future. Lynley would be happy to run similar workshops for other groups.

MAHS Annual General Meeting and Janet von Randow's talk on The Two Families of Ainslie. Sunday 7 September 2025.

This was a very well attended AGM, with 38 Members present. The Committee for 2025-26 are: Lynley Stone (President), Janet von Randow (Treasurer), Mary Inomata, Anne and Eric McKenzie, Cathie Hutchinson, Kathryn Twort and Denise McKay (Committee Members). The new Constitution was accepted by the Meeting, and the Society has since been successfully re-incorporated. Approval was given for circulating *Newsletters* in print in future and for initiating a project to photograph the streetscape of Mt Albert before it changes even more radically. The Meeting agreed that MAHS should formally offer to be custodians of Epsom & Eden District Historical Society's assets, due to their decision to wind down. Mary Inomata was presented with a Life Membership of MAHS award, to great acclaim.



Photo by Irene Wan

After the AGM closed, Janet von Randow talked about “The Two Families of Ainslie.” This fascinating presentation opened with stories about Murdoch McLean and his family, who built the two storeyed house on Allendale Rd opposite the top of McLean St, which they named Ainslie. Janet then entertained us with tales about her parents — Mt Albert Mayor Andy and Clarice Anderson — and her siblings. This included stories of children shinning up veranda poles and her father doing handstands, and was enjoyed by all. We finished the meeting with afternoon tea and a chance to chat.

Arts and Crafts Walk. Sunday 12 October 2025.

On a calm spring afternoon, 18 people joined the MAHS Arts and Crafts Walk, looking at houses designed by Basil Hooper. We started in Oakfield Ave, where Shaun Sutton spoke about his home, then we walked up Kitenui Ave to Summit Drive, along Mt Albert Rd, up Allendale Rd and back down to Ferner Ave, where our walk finished with Ross Ferguson sharing stories about his house. Mary Inomata, Janet von Randow, Lynley Stone and Kathryn Twort shared stories and information about the houses, the architect, the families who built and lived in the homes, and along with home owners and other group members, we shared other interesting facts, including lava caves and house name plates. We were very fortunate to be invited into one of the houses. Further information on Mt Albert’s Arts and Crafts Houses is available in MAHS Newsletters, on our website.



Photo by Lynley Stone

MAHS DATES TO REMEMBER

Sunday 23 November. 2–4pm. MAHS Christmas Party at Ferndale. We invite you to an afternoon of good company, good nibbles and good cheer to celebrate the Christmas season. Musical entertainment this year will be provided by a wonderful duo – mezzo soprano Catrin Johnsson and pianist Rachel Fuller. They have put together a programme just for us that includes classical music, comic songs, and some seasonal sing-alongs. Read more about them here <https://www.nzvoiceprogramme.com/> A \$2 donation for catering would be appreciated. Please RSVP to janetvonrandow@gmail.com, for catering purposes.

Saturday 13 December 2–4pm. Informal Pre-Christmas gathering in Alice Wylie Reserve. Bring a deck chair and a thermos and spend a relaxed afternoon hanging out in the Park with other members of the Society. People enjoyed having a quiet get-together before Christmas last year, so we’re making it an annual event. We will have a chilly bin full of Magnums as a treat.

OTHER HERITAGE EVENTS

Saturday 22 November. 1pm–3pm. Mt Albert Library 50th Birthday celebrations. Come along and help celebrate! MAHS will have a stall as part of the festivities.

Saturday 13 December. 10am–12am. MAHS Bookstall at Mt Albert Library. We will be chatting with community members and selling copies of Debbie Dunsford’s book, Mt Albert Then and Now. Come say hello!