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PROSPECT

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From the Pacific to the Tasman

The only coast to coast tramway in the world

by Jack Baker

'Trammies', the drivers (or motormen), conductors and inspectors were a common sight walking the Epsom streets as they reported for duty or returned from their shift at the old Epsom Tram Barn (depot). All were in uniform including caps, with the conductors swinging their shiny ticket clippers around their fingers like six-guns and carrying familiar black or grey rectangular tins. In these they carried their tickets and change, and probably their dinner. At shift's end they had to check in and balance their takings at the administration office, where a restaurant now operates.

This was the main entrance in and out of the barn and with it came a mass of rails, overhead wires, points, etc. There was a constant buzz of activity as trams left and returned at the start and end of the day. Some went down to Onehunga to start the Onehunga-City service and some to the city to start the City-Onehunga service. Conductors and drivers yelled, as surrounded by sparks of flying electricity they tried to locate their trolley poles on the overhead wires. Airbrakes were released with a hissing sound.

Unlike train tracks, tramlines were set flush with the road in a tarsealed area in the middle called the tramway reservation. The actual track was recessed a couple of inches below the surface. Very occasionally a wheel would jump the track if something like a stone lodged in the groove. One can imagine the work involved in the laying, maintenance and finally removal of tracks from 1902–56. There were approximately 72km of tracks servicing Auckland city and suburbs.

The sheds or barns stretched right to Greenlane Road and held 100 trams on fifteen tracks; the Gaunt Street city depot held 130 trams on eighteen tracks. Each tram seated approximately 52 passengers, 24 could strap-hang in the central passageway and seven were allowed on the front and rear platforms where a large sign always amused me: 'Seven standing when full inside'.

This was particularly applicable in the days of six o'clock closing on

to the kitchen or back porch to enjoy it. Alcohol in the home was not common and only brought in for special occasions. He also fancied himself as an amateur winemaker and would convert any surplus fruit, notably passionfruit or plums, into a powerful concoction which all were obliged to sample. He had no idea of the need for the scrupulous sterilization of everything involved in its preparation, and it's a wonder that they were not all poisoned. It was allowed to ferment in a large stoneware vinegar cask, which I still have, and after bottling apparently a second fermentation occurred, so once opened it exploded in a geyser of froth. The trick was to have a large jug beside the bottle, and on opening it quickly upturn it into the jug so that not too much was lost. One glass had a very beneficial effect; two glasses were getting to be dangerous.

The highlight of the evening was of course the customary large supper. There had been a flurry of activity in the kitchen in the preceding few days, when all manner of cakes, sponges and other sweet delicacies were produced. But men's tastes were not forgotten. To quote from a cookbook published in London in 1905 by Mrs Bridges, whose name was made famous as the cook in the TV series *Upstairs Downstairs* — 'From all my years in service I have learned that gentlemen and manservants alike, share a preference for pies, cold cuts and pickles when all is said and done.' So there was a pork pie, ham, pickled onions, gherkins and other savouries which men enjoyed. Coffee was a special treat. It was not used generally as an everyday beverage, excepting by the sophisticated and foreigners, until the early 1950s. It came in a dark brown bottle labelled 'coffee and chicory', and consisted of a glutinous fluid similar in appearance to honey and soy sauce marinade. A small teaspoon was put in a cup, boiling water added, and instant coffee 1930s style resulted.

This account covers only a brief period in the early 1930s. By the end of the decade the very dated interior decoration was replaced by plain surfaces and light colours, and Dad would regularly make a few pieces of new furniture according to the latest fashion trends, art deco, Queen Anne or whatever. The social occasions never ceased, only with a little less exuberance than in earlier times.

rail at door height, there was contrasting wallpaper, and it must have taken all of the paperhanger's skills to match patterns on scrim over rough wooden lining. There was a silk firescreen dominated by another embroidered peacock, heavy dark blue velvet curtains on either side of the bay window and silk lampshades beaded and tasselled. Large brass ornaments added to the effect, and when guests were expected, small cones of incense were lit to add to the atmosphere.

Despite the fact that the 1930s depression was in full swing, people had not forgotten how to enjoy themselves. The days of the 'roaring twenties' were still fresh in their memories, no doubt a reaction to the horrors of World War I. Social activities revolved around the home: card evenings, bridge, mah jong and table games were popular, sometimes taken seriously, and other times for unashamed amusement and enjoyment. There were plenty of laughs. They were a gregarious generation, and most days there would be visits from relatives, friends or neighbours for some social occasion, however simple, or for no other reason than just to keep in touch with one another.

Once or twice a year in the warm months my parents would invite about twenty of their friends for a Saturday evening of dancing. We were not on the telephone, few people were, so I imagine that invitations would have been made person to person or sent by post. Preparations took all day. Heavy furniture was moved out and squeezed into the hall, the carpet rolled up and pushed against the wall, and ballroom powder sprinkled on the floor. How they arrived or got home is uncertain. Few people had cars, and if they did, they would have shared with as many friends as possible. If taxis were available they would have had to be ordered well in advance. Some came by tram or just walked.

Music was no problem. My mother was a natural pianist and had played for dances and in the silent movies down in Opotiki during World War I. She kept herself up to date with the latest tunes, and loved every opportunity to see people enjoying themselves. Of course there was a handsome gramophone in a large black oak cabinet with a selection of waltzes, foxtrots and quicksteps on old 78s.

Dad had laid in a few bottles of ale and the menfolk were despatched

the 6.15pm drunks' tram. You can imagine the difficulty a conductor or conductress had trying to collect all the fares on a crowded tram. With a ticket bag with money in front it was well nigh impossible to push and shove through the congested middle aisle. This caused many amusing incidents with a few overweight employees, and many passengers must have escaped paying.

Tram interior, Museum of Transport and Technology (MoTaT), 2005.

Photo: Jeanette Grant

Oh yes inspectors! Just like the old feared school inspectors, these guys were likely to pop up at any time any place on any route. Their job? To check passengers' tickets and to ascertain they had paid the right fare, and to run an eye over conductor, driver and tram itself. Immaculate, severe looking, they would send the old heart racing as you frantically sought your flimsy ticket before he reached you. Was it in your tightly clenched fist, in the deep recesses of purse or pocket or dropped on a cluttered floor? However with bark worse than bite and

after giving your ticket a second clip, they'd drop off at a tram stop further on to dutifully board another tram somewhere someplace. They certainly acted as a deterrent to any free loader. But I always thought they had a pretty sweet job.

During the war years with manpower short, and up until the last tram on Saturday 29 December 1956, conductresses did a mighty job and earned the respect of the travelling public. Fifty-four years had passed since Sir John Logan Campbell drove the first tram No.1 on 17 November 1902.

Very often at night after 'the pictures' in the city came out, the last tram or two went only as far as the barn, and I walked home from there. In the city as well as Karangahape Road, Symonds Street, Newmarket and Customs Street there were raised platforms in the middle of the road called 'safety zones'. From this often precarious but supposedly safe position, you'd stand waiting for the right tram to arrive, peering to read the destination board above the drivers' windows. There was no shelter and no seating, just a concrete platform on either side of the double set of tracks, raised about six inches above road level and with a curved waist-high concrete wall at each end, many of which were destroyed by errant motorists every weekend, it seemed.

Trammies around us in The Drive were — the Ellis, Parsons, Keenans and O'Neills. In fact from my 1936 Directory there were 12 trammies in King George Avenue, 6 in Rangiatea Road, 6 in The Drive, 4 in little Bowling Avenue and 5 in Onslow Avenue alone. Harold Over, a cousin of Mt Roskill historian Trevor Watson, was a real character on the Onehunga–City tram service. A slightly chubby smiling conductor, he would joke with all, especially the children. They'd squeal with delight, as Harold would pretend to clip them with his ticket clipper. A real gent. He'd help the elderly and the burdened, and became a well-loved institution on this route. Harold joined the trams in 1928 and was there for the last tram in 1956. He estimated that in that period he crossed Auckland 99,000 times.

Going to town by tram in the 1930s, our nearest stop on the Onehunga–City route was under the verandah — then Hellabys — at the top of Onslow Road (now Avenue). It was quite nerve-wracking

13 *Auckland Star*, 28 January 1929, p.9.
14 *Celluloid Dreams*, p.19.
15 *Auckland Star,* 16 July 1934, p.10.
16 *Celluloid Dreams*, p.28.
17 *Celluloid Dreams*, p.29.
18 Auckland Scrapbook, October 1968, *Central Suburbs Leader,* 10 December 1968, Auckland City Library, Auckland Research Centre.
19 *Celluloid Dreams*, p.30.
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Partying in the early 1930s

by Bryan Boon

My parents belonged to the first generation of New Zealanders where an average family could own their own home. Provided the bread-winner had a qualification, trade, or a sound history of work experience, and therefore the expectation of steady employment, they were able to save up enough to buy a section, obtain a mortgage, build a home and pay it off in about 25 years.

And so it was that in 1926 they purchased a section in the newly subdivided Gorrie Avenue, in south Epsom (or more correctly Three Kings) and two years later their dream came true. My uncle, a builder, constructed a Californian bungalow, helped by my father in his spare time. He was a skilled cabinetmaker. Gorrie Avenue was then very much on the outer edge of Auckland's residential area. Hillsborough, Waikowhai and Mt Roskill were mostly farmland with a few small market gardens, and people from the inner suburbs had weekend and holiday baches on the bays of the Manukau Harbour.

My mother was determined that the main living room, facing the road of course, was to be decorated in the height of fashion. It was done in the Chinese style. Every wooden surface from imitation ceiling beams to floorboards were stained black and given a matt varnish finish. The wallpaper was strong blue, and richly patterned with peacocks, mandarins, pagodas, blossoms and clouds. Above the picture or plate

The substantial Crystal Palace building slumbers on, like a rather ageing princess, awaiting a transforming kiss-of-life from some handsome prince/entrepreneur. Future developments of renovation and restoration are planned, but meanwhile the 'Theatre Luxurious' has sadly become the 'theatre lugubrious'.

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1 John Lothrop Motley, in Oliver Wendell Holmes, *The Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table,* (1857–8), Chapter 6.
2 *Auckland Star*, 19 January 1929, p.22; *New Zealand Building Record*, 19 January, p.6.
3 John Stacpoole thinks that the Crystal Palace was probably designed by Grierson, Aimer & Draffin. Research has been unable to confirm that.
4 Churchman, Geoffrey B. (ed), *Celluloid Dreams: a century of film in New Zealand*, Wellington, IPL Books, 1997, pp.10–11.
5 *Auckland Star*, 19 January 1929, p.22.
6 *Auckland Star*, 21 January 1929, p.18.
7 *Celluloid Dreams*, p.25.
8 *New Zealand Herald*, 28 January 1929, p.11.
9 *Auckland Star*, 28 January 1929, p.9.
10 *Auckland Star*, 28 January 1929, p.9.
11 *New Zealand Herald*, 28 January 1929, p.11.
12 *Celluloid Dreams*, p.25.

walking up Onslow Road, as you'd start to worry about 50 yards from the top. You couldn't see the tram coming from Greenwoods Corner, only hear it, and unless there was someone actually waiting for it, the tram would invariably just sail noisily by. In those days it was fivepence for adults and twopence halfpenny for kids 'to town' from Onslow Road.

It seemed that about 90 per cent of our tram service went by Newmarket, Khyber Pass, Symonds Street, Karangahape Road and down that marvellous slope of Upper Queen Street to the bottom of Queen Street. Coming down that slope, drivers would have bags of sand at the ready in case better traction was needed. About 7 per cent (maybe) entered the City via Parnell Rise and about 3 per cent via Anzac Avenue and Customs Street to the foot of Queen Street.

Who can forget that magical area — Customs Street/Queen Street intersection, by far the busiest intersection in New Zealand? Those wonderful shops stretching to the Ferry Buildings, i.e. Wingates, Chesneys and their hams and meats, Sanfords Restaurant (great fish and chips), Big Orange Bar (fresh chilled juice coming from a giant yellow model of an orange), McKeowans Tea Rooms, Oxford Theatre (in the 30s and 40s named the London), Daisy Coffee Bar and on the corner before crossing to the wharf, Wah Jang's fruit shop, and parked outside, the peanut vendor's little cart. What a mess those shells made in trams and ferryboats! So many personalities in this fascinating area! One being the 'lucky' Art Union man who sat in a small box wearing a bowler hat, a tie and a buttonhole flower — and across the road the CPO looking down on it all.

This was the hub of Auckland's tram service, with convoys of trams going in all directions. There was a recording clock where motormen had a special key to record departure times. There was a green tramway despatch box, which controlled all services. There was a central pole in the middle of the intersection with overhead wires going in all directions. By this pole stood a traffic pointsman smartly controlling the never-ending traffic flow. (Also, here was a relic of earlier years — a water trough!)

Anyway, back to our tram standing at the safety zone at the bottom of

Queen Street apparently facing the wrong way. But no — it couldn't turn round for the return trip, so the driver would remove the handle from the front cabin and walk back through the tram. He would then reinstate the handle in the now front cabin (ferryboats operated almost the same way). Then he would get out and he and the conductor would have the frustrating job of lowering one trolley pole and relocating the other one on the overhead wires. 'Clatter-clatter' as with outstretched hands the conductor would pull the backs of the slatted wooden seats forward to face the other way. With all aboard and in readiness and the tram now vibrating gently with power, the conductor would give a tug on the overhead cord, a bell would ring, you heard a clunk as the driver released the airbrakes and our tram would grind through the points at Customs Street on the start of our 30–40 minute journey home.

A nice touch, unless you were in a hurry, was when a tram slowed appreciably to allow a wife, son or daughter to catch up and very cleverly hand their loved one, driver or conductor, a steaming billy or thermos of tea. Imagine the impatience of those watching today.

So back to the barn. Directly across the road was Wynn Falwell's establishment housing a barber's shop, tobacconist and billiard parlour. In fact from this barber's chair, you looked directly into the entrance of the barn. There was just so much activity to watch. Of course, similar to all billiard saloons in those days, you entered by a side alley. But really, what a harmless place it was and so convenient for the trammies. With petrol rationing, tyre shortages, lack of spare parts, 24,000 private cars were off the road by 1943. Indeed cars were impossible to buy, and these controls lasted many years after the war. And as Graham Stewart wrote in *Around Auckland by tram in the 50s*, trams were not just a form of public transport. Driver and conductor were expected to do much more than just control speed and collect fares. They cared for their passengers with the solicitude of a first class cabin attendant.

You all know Mrs Doris Sterling's plant shop at Greenwoods Corner. Well this building was there at the turn of the nineteenth century when horse trams struggled past on the old Auckland–Onehunga route. When the newfangled tramlines gradually (1901–2) reached out to Greenwoods Corner, many elderly people complained they had to climb four steps to

facilities separated off. In 1973 a licensed cabaret catering for 200 patrons was opened, the premises were upgraded and entertainment featured a local band and vocalist, with further plans to bring world-class acts, for Prestige Promotions intended to establish a chain of cabarets in New Zealand. But finally, after generations of enjoyment, the hall was closed as a venue for dances or live shows. In 1978 the by now shabby basement was used for teaching martial arts and yoga.

For many years Amalgamated Theatres had run both the Crystal Palace, Mt Eden, and the Regent (Lido), Epsom. Chase Corporation purchased Amalgamated Theatres, but the Moodabe family continued to run the business. In 1977 R.C. Panchia and his family bought the Crystal Palace with the idea that a regular screening of Indian films might give Auckland's Indian community, living scattered through the city, a chance to get together and socialise. After fortnightly film sessions had initially been presented for a while, however, this did not continue. The basement was modified to form an office and studios for recording and photography. Despite some desultory efforts to offer the Crystal Palace as a venue for special interest movies such as surfing, the effort to compete with changing lifestyles on the old terms was too hard.

The Crystal Palace Theatre in 2005.
Photo: Jeanette Grant

Virtually as soon as new films had completed their run in Queen Street theatres, they were widely available in video format. The cinema was closed. Offers to buy the building either for live theatre or to create an up-to-date theatre venue on the Lido model were not accepted.

1962 the Crystal Palace was already showing the (R16) classic *La Dolce Vita*, made in 1961 with Anita Ekberg, Marcello Mastroianni, Yvonne Furneaux, and Lex Barker.

By 1968, the 40-year-old theatre was showing its age and in need of a face-lift.[18] The Crystal Palace underwent major renovations to upgrade the cinema facilities. The entrance and foyer were repainted and given new lighting, carpet and furnishings. The auditorium also was repainted and given improved lighting, and new aisle carpet was laid. Improved service was proudly advertised, but times were changing together with social attitudes. 'God Save the Queen' ceased to be played in New Zealand cinemas during 1972, for most people no longer stood up respectfully as the familiar opening bars of its music sounded.[19]

Downstairs in the ballroom, the spell of Epi's reign had continued for eighteen years until his death at the age of only 48 on 23 May 1953, most poignantly while dancing with his daughter Reo at his beloved 'Crystal'. With his passing came the end of an era. The ballroom was taken over by a company who catered for the new Rock 'n Roll craze of the 1950s, and in 1956 there was dancing every Thursday, Friday and Saturday night. By 1967 the *Central Suburbs Leader* noted that except for a short lapse the Crystal had been Auckland's home of ballroom dancing for more than 30 years.[20] Prestige Productions managed affairs and in 1970 the hall was leased to an Australian showman, Harry Wren, for the staging of a live performance of *Pyjama Tops*. This included a scene in which seemingly nude girls swam in a glass tank on the stage. In fact they wore discreet skin-coloured bikini briefs. There was much local controversy over this daring and outrageous performance in respectable Mt Eden, but all publicity was good publicity, for 700 attended the first night of the show. The indignant Mt Eden Borough Council charged Celebrity International Pty Ltd and lessee Mr Dixon with 'using theatre for public performances without a licence', and the manager was fined.

In 1972 Prestige Promotions entered into discussions with the Mt Eden Borough Council about a cabaret licence, proposing the first licensed place of entertainment in 'dry' Mt Eden. By this time the ballroom had a large dance floor and a stage area, with kitchen & bar

Tram driver at work, MoTaT, 2005.
Photo: Jeanette Grant

enter the building, then a trading post. So for ease of access, the whole road was raised up for their benefit. This building would have to be the oldest at Greenwoods Corner, and the entrance is still flush with the footpath.

Trams were used for everything; they regularly carried freight and were used as travelling decoration for Royal visits, recruiting, peace celebrations and carnivals. Special trams ran to race meetings and sports events. Eden Park had a special loop for 35 trams! Thousands were moved from the grounds in half an hour! Carlaw Park had a special siding. Farmers' free trams ran from a siding in Beresford Street to outside the Farmers, usually three of them with four at busy times. There were loop lines at Ellerslie Races, Alexandra Park and Greenlane Hospital and the showgrounds. If you want to earn a safe bet, ask someone the highest point above sea level on the old tram or trolleybus route City–Onehunga. No, not the Karangahape Road or Symonds Street area, but the corner previously mentioned: the corner of Onslow Avenue and Manukau Road; a gentle rise from the city and a gradual slope down to Onehunga!

My sister has just reminded me of the five o'clock rush, which we were lucky to survive. It was like the inside of an All Black scrum! Safety zones (!) and tram stops were packed, and pandemonium ruled as your tram came to a stop — in fact before it stopped, as hundreds surged to get on board despite the cries from the conductor, 'Tram full.' Despite that sign on the platform, and standing when full inside, there was often a daredevil or two even clinging to the bottom step. No wonder so many fares went uncollected.

To alight you pushed a buzzer, or someone near one did it for you. The driver would not start again until the conductor was sure the passenger(s) had shoved through the strap hangers and was well clear of the tram. He would then give the overhead cord two pulls and we were away again.

The foot of Queen Street was chaotic at 5pm, trams apart, as the Shore-ites surged down Queen Street in a wave, anxious to board the ferry boats in the same way.

I've always remembered that hopeful or hopeless sign in the middle of each tram 'Smoking at rear of this notice only'. In a wet, crowded tram with no windows open, apart from not being able to move your arms, passive smokers in the rear end were helpless victims of the wafting fumes. An unpleasant lingering memory. Windows, very often very dirty, seemed to operate reluctantly on a ratchet system. A great tussle always ensued (in front of dozens of pairs of interested and amused eyes) to make a gain of a maximum of four inches.

Time-clock, MoTaT, 2005.
Photo: Jeanette Grant

So in my time in the 30s and 40s, the tramcar was everyone's transport and Queen Street was the heart of town. No fewer than 153 trams would travel up Queen Street (covering the whole of Auckland) in the evening peak between 4.15 and 5.15pm, an average of one tram every 23.4 seconds. During the same period a total of 111 trams travelled down Queen Street, an average of one every 32.4 seconds.

All trams carried advertising, either on boards in front and rear just below the driver's cabin e.g. FARMERS NO INTEREST WEEK; ASPRO — SAFE FOR HEADACHE & PAIN; GIRLS WANTED BYCROFT; USE SKOL— PREVENTS SUNBURN, PROMOTES SUNTAN; VACANCIES FOR MILLINERS & LEARNERS —

although extracts from it still exist at the New Zealand Film Archive.

People would go to the pictures in the evenings to avoid the inconvenience of blackouts, a feature of those tense times, as the conflict moved southward through the Pacific. But films also offered a few hours of escape from heartache, shortages and worry. In 1943 some 100,000 people attended Auckland's 43 cinemas every week, with *Mrs Miniver*, a 1942 Academy Award winner starring Greer Garson, New Zealand's favourite film. Its portrayal of the hardships suffered and overcome by a middle-class English family during the Blitz offered a universal message of hope and inspiration.

By 1945, with the war well over, New Zealanders attended the movies on average 22 times a year, a rate exceeded only by the Americans. By the beginning of 1949 there was a cinema for every 3140 people in the whole country.[16] People reserved their favourite seats at the 'Crystal' on a particular evening, often Friday or Saturday, for the programme changed regularly mid-way through each week. Queues would often form for a popular film and the 'Full House' sign might go up. If they had come by car, it might be possible to make a dash for the Regent (Lido) in Epsom or the Princess, the Astor, or the Capitol in Dominion Road, if there was still time.

By June 1960, when movie attendance was at its most popular in New Zealand, and the film version of *South Pacific* screened to packed houses for 36 weeks, there were over 40 million admissions to picture theatres annually. In Auckland, however, regular television transmissions were beginning for two hours each night, twice a week, with an increase to four hours a night just over a year later. The number of licensed TV sets was mushrooming amazingly. By 1970 cinema admissions were reduced to an annual total of 13 million and many smaller suburban theatres did not survive. The number of movie theatres in New Zealand dropped from 545 to 210. Why go out and pay for amusements when one could sit in the comfort of one's own home and be entertained?

Film-going audiences were becoming more literate. The name of a famous director or the belief in the superior quality of foreign language films could provide an incentive to visit the local cinema.[17] In March

properties.' It was reported that the piano was suffering from the endless shifts off and on the stage. By 1945, when students were again back at the College, *Manuka* recalled that 'it seemed a far cry to dim dark days in the Crystal Palace'.

The Teachers College was not the only group to use the Crystal Palace's facilities. As threats to New Zealand's security became more apparent, the EPS (Emergency Precautions Service) organised lectures and films on relevant topics, as well as First Aid classes to prepare people for wartime emergency conditions. The theatre was also used for fund-raising for the war effort. In the *NZ Herald*, for Saturday 20 June 1941, the following advertisement appeared:

> Tomorrow — Sunday at the Crystal Palace, Mt Eden, by kind courtesy of the Mt Eden Borough Council . . . commencing at 8.15pm — At Last! New Zealanders have the opportunity of seeing their own centennial production made entirely by New Zealanders — a gripping and dramatic film depicting the history of our first hundred years, the dangers and hardships endured by our forefathers in building this Dominion — *100 CROWDED YEARS* . . . A picture every New Zealander will want to see. The feature film will be supported by an excellent array of short subjects. Prices 1/6 and 1/-.

The theatres, for it was also shown in Onehunga, were free and the staff donated their services. Total proceeds from the showing of this fifty-minute 'featurette' from the Government Film Studios were to go to the Auckland Patriotic Fund.

Although the time of screening would have allowed churchgoers to attend after evening worship or evensong at 7pm, the showing of films on Sunday, as well as other breaches of sabbatarianism, were frowned upon by many. Rev Jack urgently called together Trust members of the nearby Mt Eden Methodist Church, because of the previous Sunday evening's film screening in the Crystal Palace. It was resolved that they support him in obtaining the 'consent of the congregation to a letter of protest to the Mt Eden Borough Council'. Despite all the hype and controversy, this film seems to have sunk virtually without trace,

MK; GET MORE FOR YOUR MONEY — MAPLE; or on a long board on the roof running the length of the tram LONDON BATTERSBY HATS.

The tram destination signs were on a roller controlled by the driver. They were very clear, with street name and suburb printed in bold capitals, white on a black background e.g. CITY VIA TOWN HALL or CITY VIA PARNELL or CITY VIA ANZAC AVE.

My last memory. If sitting by a window in busy times, you'd automatically flinch when a car or truck came abreast; sometimes it seemed only an inch away. But we lived through it all and trammies will always hold a special place in my memory.

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Horse-drawn buses

by Edna Griffith

Sometimes, as I travel by car with friends through the lovely suburb of Mt Eden where I spent over 80 years of my life, my thoughts go back to the time when Mt Eden was really an outer suburb — not many formed footpaths, and certainly no well-kept grass verges adorned with flower-beds, as we see today. Transport, in those days, was by means of the horse-drawn buses, which ran only once an hour, so if one just missed a bus, one was faced with an hour's wait before the next bus came along. However, in those more leisurely days of truly friendly service, the bus driver always kept an eye out for anyone who appeared to be hurrying down a side road in the hope of catching the bus, and he would stop his horses and wait at the end of the road for the latecomer.

I well remember my mother telling us of one occasion when she herself was one of the stragglers. On this particular day mother had been busy getting my older sister off to school, and by the time we two

younger ones were dressed, time was starting to run out. So mother instructed my little brother and me to walk slowly down the road and wait at the bus stop, assuring us that she wouldn't be long, as she had only to finish dressing by putting on her blouse. We obediently went on ahead, and when mother came out of our gate she was surprised to see the bus already at the corner, and the driver, who had dismounted, standing a yard or two up the road watching for her arrival! She hurried to the corner to find we children already seated in the bus, and both the driver and passengers all looking very amused and smiling broadly. Feeling rather embarrassed, mother boarded the bus, to be told by one of the passengers how the bus driver had stopped the bus and said to me, 'Are you children coming on the bus?' I had replied, 'Yes, we're just waiting for mother.' 'Where is mother?' the driver had asked. 'Oh,' I had replied, in a clear voice for all the bus to hear, 'she'll be here in just a few minutes; she's putting on her blouse!' I think the driver and passengers could be excused if, upon mother's appearance, they were all looking with amused eyes to ensure that the blouse had been duly put on!

I remember one driver, whose name was Dan — I suppose he had a surname, but he was always just Dan to all the bus travellers, who grew to love him for his patience and helpful courtesy. Dan was so thoughtful for his horses, too, and never pressed them too hard — I don't think he ever used a whip.

In those days, the road at the foot of Mt Eden was ungraded and very steep. It was called Pound Hill because the borough pound was situated there. (Today our Wesley Hospital, run by Methodist Mission Northern, stands on what used to be Pound Hill.) On the trips from the city to Mt Eden at peak hours, Dan would stop the bus at the foot of Pound Hill and request the gentlemen passengers to alight and walk up the hill, to lighten the load for the horses. Women and children remained in the bus, and the horses, with their lightened load, easily reached the top of the hill, where the bus waited for the walkers to re-embark, and the journey was continued.

Living quite near to our home was a retired English Colonel — very dignified and very much 'The Colonel' — he always wore kid gloves and carried a stick. He was always held in great respect and, perhaps,

Auckland Teachers College had initially held their socials in Seddon Memorial Technical College Hall, but these were subsequently held in the Crystal Palace ballroom and later transferred to the Orange Hall.

In 1942 at what editorial staff marked as the beginning of the fourth year of World War II, *Manuka*, the magazine of the Auckland Teachers College, reported (p.45) that their buildings had been taken over by the authorities for military purposes. Although they had been on the move, itinerant between Auckland University College, their own site and the Mt Eden Normal School, they were temporarily settled in rather limited quarters at the normal school, but there was no large hall to accommodate the students for their usual Thursday and Friday assemblies. Where else could staff and students meet for these memorable gatherings, but in neighbouring Crystal Palace cinema? 'Our visitors this year have covered a wide range of subjects though in the main we have concentrated our attention on aspects of the organisation and management of our city of Auckland. Amongst other topics none has been more interesting to us all than Major de Clive Lowe's account of his experiences while a prisoner of war in Italy.'

Ivan Whyle remembered that College assemblies at the Crystal Palace, between June and December 1943 included a wonderful variety of speakers. Among them were the Anglican Bishop of Melanesia, a scientist from DSIR, Mt Albert, a lecture on the 'German Character' by Professor Fitt of the Auckland University Education Department, a drama recital by Maria Dronke, as well as student debates, oratory, and drama. After lunch most students walked the short distance from Mt Eden Normal School (now Auckland Normal Intermediate), via Disraeli Street to the Crystal Palace. The cinema had fixed seating that was much more comfortable than crowded conditions at the normal school when up to three 'sections', or groups, might attend a lecture, one group sitting along the platform edge with notebooks on knees!

A note in *Manuka* by 1944 (p.36), however, was not so appreciative of the amenities on offer in the cinema. It recorded that the opening of the new Campbell Hall at the normal school on 3 September had 'meant that our days of exile in the garish Crystal Palace were over. Gone were the ill-lit spaces, the cramped stage and poor acoustic

Nonchalantly, and with great equanimity, they dealt with crowds, change, candies, and the unwrapped frozen novelties. Theatre ice creams always seemed to have a special ingredient of small lumps of ice distributed through them. In texture, if not in flavour, they were much like the lumps of hokey-pokey in New Zealand's favourite ice cream, but that came later.

Some folk made a dash for one of the three dairies nearby, and one of the two shops that were actually part of the theatre building made a good living as a milk-bar. Mrs Alice Cherrie remembered their shop, the next one in line, as virtually empty on a 1950s Saturday evening, and then in the twinkling of an eye, packed full of urgent customers in the theatre interval, demanding the ice creams already stacked in the refrigerator, or the recently arrived *8 O'clock* newspapers. As soon as the bell sounded, the crowd melted away and there was a lull until the supper break in the dance hall programme when again the shop filled with hungry and thirsty customers.

Ballroom dancing, as well as movie going, offered another enjoyable pastime that didn't cost much during Depression years. From the early 1930s, as soon as the Crystal Palace basement had been completed, it was used for wedding receptions and by local sports bodies for fund-raising dances, since many church halls did not allow dancing on their premises.

In 1935 gifted musician Epi Shalfoon took over the ballroom. Gareeb Stephen Shalfoon's mother, Raria Hopa, was descended from the six major hapu of Te Whakatohea and his father, George Shalfoon, was born in Damascus. The name Gareeb was rendered as Karepi in Maori, and subsequently shortened to Epi. Although the Crystal Palace basement offered few, if any, amenities, the crowds flocked in to dance to the melodies provided by Epi and his band, with vocals by his daughter Reo, during the 1940s. Many were the meetings and matchings made through those years at the 'Crystal'; for the early 1940s brought the excitement of young American servicemen enjoying the opportunity for R&R at the popular Mt Eden venue.

Other groups used the ballroom too, during the years of the war. Dispossessed of their own home, students from neighbouring

regarded with a little awe. On this particular day mother had taken me and my little toddler-brother to visit our Grandma who lived in Newton Road, Symonds Street, which was then a pleasant residential area. Later in the day we waited in Symonds Street to board a bus for the homeward journey. When the bus came along it was very full, but mother managed to find a seat and she took little brother on her knee, while I stood beside her.

Now, it happened that the Colonel was seated beside mother, and as the bus jolted along, I was a bit unsteady on my feet, so the Colonel put an arm round me to keep me steady, and I leaned against his knee. As I said before, the Colonel always wore kid gloves, and apparently I was rather intrigued with these gloves, so he showed me how to undo the fasteners. Once I got the gloves unfastened, it seemed natural to me to remove them, which I did, thereby revealing the Colonel's very hairy-backed hands! Now I had always loved small furry animals, and much to the embarrassment of my mother and the amusement of the other passengers, I lovingly stroked his hairy hands, and smiling up into his face, said with delight — 'FUR!' Our trip continued, and by this time the Colonel and I had become good friends, chatting away together.

As we neared journey's end, and much to the surprise of the passengers, the usually reserved and dignified Colonel smiled down at me, and said, 'You know, I think you are a very nice little girl, and I wish I had a little girl like you at home.' Now ours was a Christian home and we were always taught that when a new baby came into the home it was sent as a gift of God, so, when the Colonel expressed his wish for a little girl, I evidently thought I could help him, so I said in a clear childish voice, 'Well, if you ask Jesus to send you a little girl, I'm sure He will!'

I don't know whether the Colonel ever got his little girl, but I hope he did, even though she may have come as a little granddaughter! I believe everyone on the bus enjoyed the trip that day, but I think mother may have been relieved when we reached our stop, and she could remove her talkative little daughter from the bus.

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The day of the go-slow strike

by Muriel Williams

Before World War II, I was working as a typist in Fort Street and nearly everybody, including the bosses, travelled to the city by tram.

At eight o'clock each morning the Onehunga Fire Station set off a siren, which was my cue to leave home in order to catch my tram to the office. Arriving in Fort Street, I would check the time on Nathan's clock, and always had five minutes to walk inside the door. However, one morning things were very different.

I heard the siren as usual, and walked down the road, ready to see my usual tram travelling up Manukau Road. It was always the same tram, with the same motorman and the same conductor, and a lot of the same passengers each day.

But this morning, before I reached the bottom of my street a tram came along and a different motorman called out to me: 'Are you catching the tram to town, Miss?' As I nodded, he added, 'Don't hurry. We will wait for you.'

I crossed over Manukau Road and boarded his tram, and a strange conductor took my fare. Then I looked around but none of my usual friends were there.

'What is going on?' I asked.

'We're holding a go slow strike,' the conductor replied. 'But we are only obeying our rule book.'

> When you reach the terminus, make sure you sweep out the tram before the return trip.
>
> If you see people hurrying to catch the tram, wait for them, as they do not want to have to miss your tram.

So all the way to town, we stopped and waited for people to get on, even if they were only halfway down the street when the motorman saw them. Of course this meant that we got later and later as we reached the city. By the time we arrived at the bottom of Queen Street it was well past ten o'clock, and I was very worried at being so late.

horsemanship, the simple spirit of the patriarchal clan, the primal savagery of some of the scenes, all well portrayed, take one willingly back into another world.' [11]

The orchestra is kept busy, for although the first 'talkie' *The Jazz Singer* was released in October 1927, it was not until 18 April 1929 that the Regent and Strand theatres, both in the city, screened the first talkies in Auckland on the same night.[12]

The mayor also refers to the fact that the proprietors have shown good taste in naming the new theatre, for 'the name Crystal Palace was well known throughout the Empire as a home of good entertainment. It was a British name, which should remind those connected with the film industry to show British films, and so help keep us close to Great Britain in spirit and ideals.'[13] New Zealand had at least one other Crystal Palace theatre already in central Christchurch, which had been built in 1918; it was to be demolished in the mid-twentieth century. The Crystal Palace, London, was burnt down in 1936.

How those local residents enjoyed all the facilities that the theatre offered during the bleak days of hardship that were to come! It has been estimated that 'by 1932, with the Depression at its worst', there were nevertheless 'some 600 cinemas in a country of 1.5 million people'.[14] Movies offered a wonderful mix of escapism — with fantasy and fun, nostalgia and romance, mystery and mayhem. They were accompanied by footage of world news with an up-to-date coverage previously unimagined. A 1934 advertisement for the Crystal Palace proudly offered a newsreel featuring the arrival of Jean Batten in Australia, while a young Katherine Hepburn starred in *Little Women*, approved for general exhibition. A matinée of the main feature was to be held on Saturday at two o'clock. 'Parents note "Little Women" is particularly suitable for all children. It will do them good to see it, in fact, it is your duty to see that they do.'[15]

One of the joys of going to the pictures for children and adults alike was the treat of lollies and ice creams. Some people enjoyed the traditional box of chocolates. For others, during the interval boys appeared at both theatre aisles carrying trays suspended around their necks, purveyors of pre-frozen ice creams in cones, and bags of sweets.

1350 people, and there are two aisles, with the main block of seating in the centre, and smaller sections at each side. In this early example of a stadium-type picture theatre, the single floor without stairs or balcony, sloping towards the small orchestra pit, provides a clear view of the screen for everyone. The 'Dress Circle' comprises those seats that are a comfortable distance from the screen. The uncarpeted and inclined floorboards occupied by the many rows of tip-up seats are destined to provide children attending Saturday afternoon matinées with one of the very best jaffa-rolling venues in Auckland.

As we look around us we can see the décor, described as 'rich in design and colouring'.[8] Extensive use has been made of fibrous plaster to achieve an interior with a stunning and eclectic mix of art deco and exotic design. There is a focus on the stylised sunburst ceiling, where 'a great Eastern lantern at the centre, which can flood the auditorium with coloured light' holds pride of place.[9] Amazing filigree shell patterning decorates the enormous proscenium semi-circular arch and the stage is screened by lavish drop curtains. The novelty of ever-changing, coloured lighting hidden in the tracery around the stage is breathtaking before the show begins, and it continues through the interval. In fact, in his opening speech, the Mayor of Mt Eden, Mr Potter, refers to the lighting effects and the fact that the theatre was 'a boon to the Auckland Electric Power Board and had a special installation to take the enormous amount of power needed'.[10]

The stage is deep and capable of holding a large number of performers. On this exciting opening night, after a performance of the overture 'Raymond' by the Crystal Palace Orchestra of seven players, the evening's programme continues with a Gaumont Graphic and a Metro-Goldwyn newsreel and a bright two-reel comedy, *Her Husky Hero*. As well as these moving pictures we witness Mademoiselle Michell in person, a dainty trapeze artist performing many breath-taking feats in the air, 'suspending herself in a daring fashion from silken ropes hanging from the ceiling above the stage'. Finally, the feature film, MGM's *The Cossacks* starring John Gilbert, and based on a well-known story by Count Tolstoy, is a breathtaking 'tale of wars and feats of arms reminiscent of medieval romance. The wonderful

When I arrived at work, I found a crowd of others were standing around talking and laughing about what had happened, as of course they had all had the same experience as I had.

At last things settled down and we started working, but when five o'clock came, most of us stayed behind to finish off the mail. This suited me, as I had to attend shorthand night classes at the Seddon Memorial Technical College. At seven o'clock, when I was ready to go home, I found Queen Street absolutely full of trams, nearly all half full or empty. I asked the conductor the reason and he replied: 'The trams left the depot in the same order as every other day, and at five o'clock, the trams were full to overflowing, as they were the ones which were usually running at three, and now all these trams are the ones put on for the five o'clock rush, although of course, the people went home a couple of hours ago.' It was really quite laughable to hear such a crowd of half-empty trams careering down Khyber Pass Road, mostly with no passengers in them at all.

The next morning, in case things were going to be the same, I had an early breakfast and walked down the road at seven o'clock, but once again a different tram came along, with another motorman and conductor. This time the strike was over, and I arrived at work before eight o'clock to find a few of my friends waiting for the door to open for the factory workers to start at eight o'clock. We were able to go inside and up to our lunch room, where we made a cup of tea and talked until it was time to start working.

I was very pleased the following morning to catch my usual tram, with the familiar motorman and conductor as well as a lot of my friends on board.

I don't think the trams ever went on another go slow strike!

My tram trivia

by Jeanette Grant

We still live directly on the Mt Eden Road tram route and in the 40s and 50s, to travel from Watling Street to the city cost fourpence for adults and twopence for children. We took it for granted that they would come past every ten minutes. It was three sections to town and took about twenty minutes, going along Mt Eden Road and down Symonds Street and Anzac Avenue to Customs Street. From there the tram proceeded up Hobson Street and then on to Point Chevalier, the destination displayed upon its signboard. Customs Street, right at the foot of Queen Street, was their time stop. There was a green-painted box on a pole and the driver had to check in. He then had to wait until the right time to continue.

If you woke early, you could hear them rattling past from about 6am. In the evening the last one left town at 11.20pm after the pictures finished. Those were the days when women expected men to offer them a seat, and any child sitting while an adult stood would be told off. The term strap-hanging was current, for if you had to stand, you needed to hold onto the back of a seat or one of the leather loops hanging from the overhead rail in order to keep your balance.

I will always remember my sister's birthday in 1947. We were having a party at home when there was an almighty crash and everybody ran down the drive to Mt Eden Road to see what had happened. A tram heading to Three Kings had been stopped opposite the shops on the corner of Wairiki Road with passengers disembarking. A fire engine hurrying down the hill from Balmoral Road had tried to pass the tram on the wrong side of the road. Unfortunately there was a car coming the other way and the fire engine ended up in the butcher's shop on the corner. I remember hearing that the engine was impaled on the butcher's block. A memorable birthday!

I have read that the worst tram disaster in Auckland occurred in its very earliest years. On Christmas Eve 1903, a doubledecker tram on its way into town suffered a brake failure and ran half a mile backwards down Eden Terrace until it crashed into another loaded city-bound tram coming up behind. There were three killed and over 50 injured.

But first, let us go back to those opening days and imagine that we are residents of Mt Eden, Dominion Road, Mt Roskill and Epsom. A week before opening night, we have all been invited to enter this new building for an exciting preview inspection. A notice in the newspaper invites us to come to the Crystal Palace on Saturday 19 January 1929, at 8 o'clock, to 'see what has been provided for your delectation'.[5] Invitation cards aren't needed so we'll dress in our best clothes and set out to experience this free occasion. Everybody can come and enjoy a full programme of pictures with special music by the Crystal Palace Orchestra under the leadership of Miss Edna Langmuir, FTCL. If we arrive by car, there is parking at the top of nearby Fairview Road.

Alas, many of us trudge back home disappointed, and Monday's newspaper brings an important public apology!

> To the residents of Mt Eden, Epsom,
> Dominion Road and Mount Roskill.
> The Management and Proprietors of Amalgamated Theatres Ltd., tender their sincerest apologies to the hundreds of residents of those suburbs who were unable to gain admission to the New and Luxuriously-appointed Crystal Palace on last Saturday evenings Grand Inspection Night.
> The official grand opening takes place next Saturday, January 26 at 8pm by courtesy E.H. Potter Esq. (Mayor of Mt Eden) who will publicly declare Auckland's Leading Picture Theatre Open.
> Specially selected All-Star Programme to honour the occasion.
> Box plan at Theatre phone 20 573 for reserves.[6]

Perhaps we can book for the opening ceremony at a cost of 1/- for the Orchestral Stalls or 1/6 for the Dress Circle, with an extra 6d for booking. In so doing we might number ourselves among the one sixth of Aucklanders who by the late 1920s went to the movies every Saturday night.[7]

Entering through the foyer with its mosaic floor tiles, we follow the usherette into the subdued lighting of the theatre space and down carpeted aisles to our seats. This large auditorium can accommodate

its current registration under the Historic Places Act 1993, as a Category II building 'of historic or cultural heritage, significance, or value'.

A permit to build the theatre had been obtained from the Mt Eden Borough Council by Hippodrome Pictures Ltd, one of Dr Frederick John Rayner's entrepreneurial ventures. Local residents watched as the two adjoining sections of 'unsightly' land were transformed from a rocky wilderness, with a steep drop to the west from Mt Eden Road, to the site of a large impressive brick structure with a neo-classical front elevation incorporating a closed colonnade. Described at the time as 'the most handsome building of its kind in Auckland suburbs', and 'the highest in Mt Eden Road', it took full advantage of the difficult nature of the location, utilising the space with two floors.[2] The sharp difference in ground-level had purportedly been created to ensure an even gradient for the tramlines which continued to the terminus at Pencarrow Avenue. The laying of the tracks for the Mt Eden line had presented a headache for those responsible for its construction because of the uneven and stony terrain of the route.

The building project was undertaken by Noel Cole Ltd, and the plans were drawn up in his office. Sadly there is no record of the architect's name, despite efforts to find who that person might have been.[3] This movie palace, which cost £15,000 to build, was the seventh link in the chain of city and suburban theatres owned by Amalgamated Theatres Ltd, previously Hippodrome Pictures, with links to the Moodabe family; Noel Cole was a good friend of Dr Rayner. From 1911, when there were four inner-city cinemas in Auckland, until the end of the 1920s, 38 new cinemas were reported to have opened in greater Auckland and the Crystal Palace was one of them.[4]

Two shops were incorporated into the design on the road-frontage, together with the entry to a narrow flight of stairs that gave access to the sub-floor. For many years this space operated as one of the most popular dance halls in Auckland. As there was no air-conditioning, the steep stairway offered one of the few ways in which this often crowded and sweltering place was ventilated. On Saturday nights, departing moviegoers negotiated a blast of hot air laden with cigarette-smoke and noise, which swept up the stairs and across the pavement.

Fond memories of the Regent, Epsom, in the 30s & 40s

by Jack Baker

The Regent, Epsom, opened Monday 28 July 1924 with its own orchestra and best carpet, and furnished with handsome tip-up seats. The film shown that evening was the 1922 British silent version of *The Bohemian Girl* with a splendid cast of Ivor Novello, Gladys Cooper, C. Audrey Smith (a very early English test cricketer), Ellen Terry and Constance Callier. Hal Roach made a later version in 1936 in the USA with Laurel & Hardy, described in *Variety* as a 'comedy with little comedy'.

In Gordon Ingham's great book *Everyone's Guide to the Movies*, he wrote of the Regent that 'you could see all the cowboys at the Regent, Epsom, opposite the old Tram Barn', and the milkbar cowboys flocked there accordingly. In the late 1960s they changed the name to the Lido for the showing of Continental films and better class films that were not appreciated by the hoi polloi in Queen Street. So the Lido achieved what the Remuera Tudor set out to do, and thrived accordingly.

For twenty years or more, the Regent's manager was jovial Mr Samuel Hardwick, always standing by the ticket office immaculate in dress suit and bow tie. He lived in Wilding Avenue, Epsom, and walked to the theatre two or three times daily. Everyone knew him and greeted him. The usherettes were the Stacey sisters — twins I think. Their father owned a factory in Newmarket where they made those great Pulmona pastilles for coughs and colds. Valmae Cordes was another attractive usherette.

The Regent had a dress circle (not like the Lido today) and the broad staircase was on the right of the ticketbox with toilets and manager's office beneath. The dress circle of course was sixpence or a shilling dearer.

Saturday night, mainly for adults, was a real social occasion. Mums and dads dressed for the occasion, and many Epsom residents had firm bookings on Saturday nights throughout the year to see Greer Garson, Bette Davis or Walter Pidgeon, in such classics as *Mrs Miniver*, *How Green was my Valley*, *Dark Victory*, and the like.

Otherwise, reserved bookings for a Saturday night were made on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday at the ticket office throughout the week. The girl had a large plan of the theatre, you made your choice of seats and a large cross was made when you paid for and received tickets. On the Saturday you had to claim your reserved seat(s) fifteen minutes before the curtain went up at 8pm. If there was a popular film, there were usually a few patrons standing by in case the reserved seats were not claimed. If by chance the original ticket holder turned up at five to eight then the genial Mr Hardwick had the job of sorting it out.

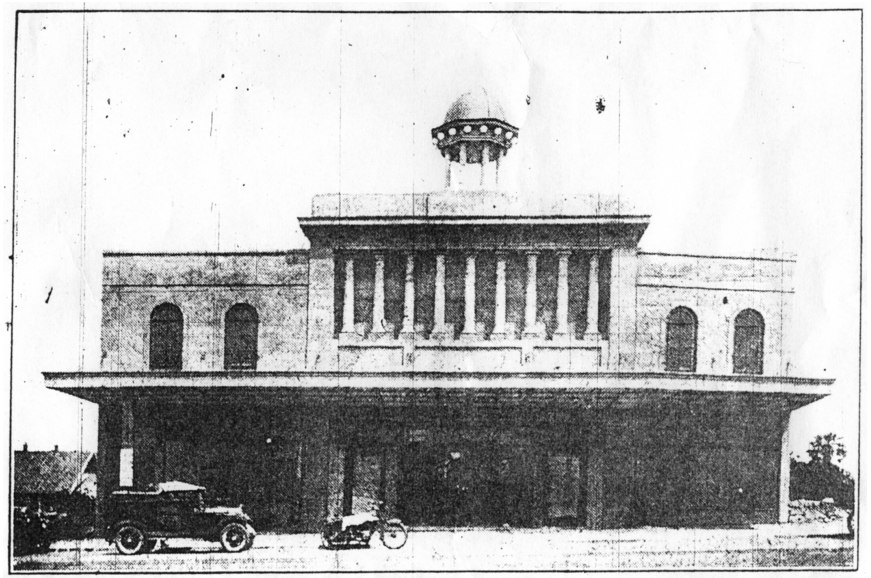
In the 30s, Saturday afternoon matinées if you were allowed to go (me very rarely — Dad insisting I go off to football at Blandford Park where Dad was Auckland Soccer chairman) were an exciting experience. Cowboy films and serials with Buck Jones, Tom Mix, Tim McCoy and later the sissy singing cowboys Gene Autrey and Roy Rogers. The serials always finished with the hero in dire circumstances and you just *had* to go the next week to see how and if he got out of it. You'd run home from these action films convinced you wanted to be a cowboy, twiddling an imaginary six-gun and trying to sing *Home on the Range* or *I'm Heading for the Last Roundup*.

During the mid-30s I was an ice cream boy for a short time, filling in for the regular lad selling threepenny and one penny (I think) hard ice cream (in cones) from a tray before the start and during the interval. Also on the tray were chocolates, including Nestles croquettes, I think they were called. Very elegant thin, round chocolate pieces individually wrapped in silver paper. They were about one inch in diameter and stacked about six inches long. Sometimes the ice cream cones were passed along the rows to those in the middle. How hygienic!

These ice creams came from the confectionery shop adjoining the foyer on the right side with the entrance in Manukau Road. It was owned by Messrs Goodwin & Wood. On the left of the foyer was Mr Hill's hairdresser and tobacconist — later Keith Prendiville. The Regent was surrounded by all sorts of shops, a very busy area. Two doors down from the Regent towards Alba Road was a dairy run by Mrs Hilda Williams and two doors up towards Queen Mary Avenue was yet another owned by Gibb Hill. The two main ice cream brands were

The Crystal Palace, Mt Eden
'The Theatre Luxurious'

by Helen Laurenson



Crystal Palace Theatre

Photo: Auckland Star, 16 Jan 1929

'Give us the luxuries of life, and we will dispense with its necessities' wrote nineteenth century American historian, John Lothrop Motley.[1] Following the collapse of the Wall Street stockmarket on Black Thursday, 24 October 1929, the Great Depression of the 1930s sharply cut back those luxuries, and even the necessities of life for many New Zealanders.

Already, however, in January 1929, Mt Eden's Crystal Palace Theatre had been opened with a fanfare of publicity. As we peer at the now deserted foyer, through the wide span of bevelled glass doors, it seems hard to believe that this shabby movie theatre was described for many years as 'The Theatre Luxurious'. It epitomized all that was glamorous and stylish in modern theatre design, and for that reason was awarded

absent from a meeting, none of them ever had the pleasure of presiding. Once a year the society held a concert in the hall. On Sunday mornings, while Bible class was being held in the library, Sunday school was conducted in the hall. On Sunday evenings a Presbyterian service was held there, the preacher being the Rev George Brown of Onehunga. Socials and dances were also held in the hall.

Next door to the hall was Jamieson's store which was a favourite meeting place for the young men of the district. Seated on sacks of chaff and bags of potatoes, which were always very much in evidence at the side of the store opposite the counter, they discussed all the weighty topics of the day, from football to politics. As there was no postal delivery in those days, mail was collected at the store, so a young man always had a valid excuse for being there. There was no class distinction — gentlemen's sons aired their views and so did those on a lower rung of the social ladder, but the arguments were always friendly.

All that was required to become a member of that exclusive society was a reputation of respectability coupled with fair-mindedness and amiability — that was democracy in its truest sense.

Before I close, I should like to quote a paragraph from an article on my grandfather's life in New Zealand which appeared in the *NZ Herald* on 21 July 1894, a little more than a year before his death in September 1895:

> He has endured all the hardships and vicissitudes of a pioneer colonist. By business integrity, industry and thrift coupled with judicious investments in land in the early days, which he has held alike through depressions and booms, Mr Greenwood has obtained a handsome competence. The octogenarian is now in 'a green old age' enjoying to the full a well-earned leisured ease and, looking at the outside world through 'the loopholes of retreat', is cheerfully awaiting that hour which comes to all but which Mr Greenwood's friends hope is yet far distant.

Written by William Greenwood's daughter Ella Greenwood in 1962 and sent in by his great granddaughters, the Peacocke twins — Esme Peters and Roie Kayll of Epsom.

SOURCE

Journal of the Auckland Historical Society, No.1, October 1962 (now unprocurable).

Peters (Mr Puttick of Alba Road the manager) and Robinsons. I preferred Robinsons. At half time, patrons would flock out and fill these three outlets for ice creams, drinks and sweets. When choc bombs were invented, no matter how careful you were chocolate stains were inevitably found on good trousers or blouses the next day.

After World War II, paper was in short supply and the popular Saturday night sports paper *The 8 o'clock* (coloured pink) was rationed. I well remember standing outside the Regent with many others even after the National Anthem had been played ('God Save the King' in those days) waiting anxiously for the tightly tied bundle of *8 o'clocks* to be thrown from the passing vehicle (without stopping) for the dairy owner to *rip* open and sell to the anxious customers — at twopence a copy I think. When you entered the theatre fifteen minutes later you'd whisper to Mum or Dad to tell you what you'd missed with accompanying 'Shush, shush'. The vehicle of course continued on to service all the dairies and other outlets down to Onehunga. This happened all over Auckland. We loved to see who had scored all the runs or all the tries and if it was you, to see your name in print.

Oh yes, returning to matinées, I think my parents were concerned about my virtue. The back seats were always occupied by the older (and braver) boys with the local lasses.

Epsom around the Regent was so different. Trams rattled past almost within touching distance as cars just squeezed past. The great shops adjoining had verandahs, and you'd just prop your bike against the verandah posts (quite safely). The theatre was a focal point on a Friday or Saturday night. If it wasn't the Regent, or if it was booked out, you'd look at the nearby cinemas: Crystal Palace in Mt Eden Road, the posh Tudor at Remuera, the Alexandra (later the Victory) at Greenlane, or Newmarket's Rialto. But it just wasn't the same as going to the good old Regent with all its familiar faces. Such was the community spirit.

The Regent played an exciting part in our days at Epsom School in The Drive. I well recall paying threepence (how sad for those who couldn't afford it and were left behind) and marching up Queen Mary Avenue in class lots to see exciting educational animal films. They were a series with Frank Buck called *Bring em Back Alive*. This took place

The Lido in May 2005

Photo: John Denny

about once a year — except in 1936 it happened twice, as I remember marching up to see the coronation of King George VI. To raise funds for the school, pupils sold tickets for a certain evening and some of the proceeds went to the school.

Another feature of those years were Tuesday or Wednesday guest nights when two people were admitted for the price of one, and during the war of course, the Regent as well as theatres throughout NZ were well and truly blacked out.

I well recall during the 30s the Regent was used for election meetings. It was then in the Roskill electorate and the Labour candidate for years, Richards of Roskill, used to throw down his box on street corners, talk for fifteen minutes and then move on to the next corner. It happened outside our place on the corner of The Drive and Onslow Avenue as our neighbour was the Hon Bill Parry, Minister of Internal Affairs with the Mickey Savage government. But closer to election night he'd use the Regent for the larger and rowdier meetings.

Where have all the suburban cinemas gone? Long may the Lido/Regent continue!

were three cottages belonging to the Wynyard family and no road intersections. One of these cottages is still standing.

Everywhere there were green fields with sleek cattle grazing in them, and this applies particularly to the Mears' farm which extended from north of Golf Road to Ngaroma Road. The homestead nestled under the lee of One Tree Hill, almost in line with Ngaroma Road, the entrance gate being at Golf Road but branching off to the right just below where Fern Avenue is today. When the property was first subdivided, Golf and Ngaroma roads were formed.

The home of Mr Robert Wynyard was up on the lower slopes of One Tree Hill. The Auckland Golf Club built its first club house, now a private residence, a little to the north but in close proximity to the Wynyard homestead. The Wynyards had two entrances to their property — the Mears' entrance at Golf Road served both families, and there was another entrance to Gladwin Road. When the property was subdivided Gladwin, Lewin and Tuperiri roads and Fern Avenue were formed.

On Manukau Road at Onslow Avenue (formerly Onslow Road, named in honour of Lord Onslow who was the Governor of New Zealand from 1889–92), there were buildings on both sides of the road — several houses, a general store, a butcher's shop and in 1882 a hall and a library were added to the collection. These latter buildings were originally built in Watties Lane (now Alba Road) by the Wesleyans of Epsom, who sold them in 1880 to a group of Presbyterians. In 1882 they were moved to a section on Manukau Road, donated by Mr Gardner of Emerald Hill.

The library was a detached building at the back of the hall and was used for a number of years as a schoolroom by the Misses Kate and Martha Courtnay, who conducted a girls' school. On Sunday mornings a Bible class, under the leadership of Mr John Burns, met there. The Epsom and One Tree Hill road boards held their monthly evening meetings in the library, and during the winter months there was a meeting, once a week, of the Mutual Improvement Society, or as some preferred to call it, the Debating Society, of which Mr W.N. McIntosh, one of the first headmasters of Epsom Public School, was president. There were several vice-presidents but, as Mr McIntosh was never

Pah Road in 1884 and later another one with frontages to both Manukau and Pah roads, which was held by him and members of his family until 1952, the total ownership of land by the Greenwoods on the original triangle covered a period of 110 years and two months — a long time when one considers Auckland's comparatively short life.

As already stated, my grandfather's object in buying land in Epsom was to live there when the time came for his retirement, and this accounts for the long period which elapsed between the time he purchased the land and the time he went there to reside. In the meantime the section, fenced and grassed, was leased to Mr Thomas Cleghorn who used it for grazing purposes in conjunction with his farm on the west side of Pah Road. There was no length of tenure stated in the lease which was subject to three months' notice on either side. (Incidentally, Mr Cleghorn's marriage to Miss Roseanne Powditch in July 1848 was the first marriage solemnised in St Andrew's Church, Epsom, the officiating clergyman being the Rev Dr Purchas.)

By the time my grandparents went to live in Epsom, all their sons and daughters were married and settled in homes of their own, with the exception of one son who never married. With adequate help both inside the house and outside, they began a comfortable and leisurely old age. My grandmother was at last able to indulge in her hobbies, reading and music, and my grandfather had plenty of time to enjoy gardening and to attend to his business affairs without undue haste. They were deeply religious and each morning after breakfast everyone on the property assembled in the breakfast room for short prayers and Bible reading. They were regular attendees at the Sunday afternoon service at St Andrew's Church.

When the house was first built, southern Epsom was rural. On the left hand side of Pah Road from Greenwoods Corner to Mt Albert Road there was only one house and no road intersections. On the right hand side, for the same distance, there were four houses and two road intersections, Selwyn Road and Glasgow Lane.

On Manukau Road, on the right hand side going towards Royal Oak, there were five houses (three of them are still standing) and no road intersections. On the left hand side, for the same distance, there

Ruth Coyle of the Rutland Group

by Jeanette Grant

Ruth Mary Coyle, née Innes, was born in Wellington on 22 June 1908. She was the second daughter of Dudley Innes and his wife Marguerite Mary McKelvie. His father, George Innes, had been the first postmaster in Palmerston North, while Marguerite was the youngest daughter of John McKelvie, who had come to New Zealand in 1853, and his wife Selina Amon. Both these surnames are well known in New Zealand in such diverse fields as art and motor racing.

Ruth's father Dudley was much older than his wife. He was a foreman with the NZ Post & Telegraph, and when he retired in 1912 they sailed for England with their three children in the *Ruahine*, and lived in Belsize Park and Golders Green in London for a year before moving to Bournemouth in 1913. Here they rented a big new three-storey house called 'Ashurst' at 8 Milton Road. In these pre-war days, there were maids to do the work and children had a nurse. Three more children were born to them in England.

In 1914 the two eldest girls started going to a little private school called 'Dunkeld' where Ruth remembers winning her first prize for drawing. They were educated there for two years until her sister Freda fell sick. They then had a governess of whom they were extremely fond. Miss Fudge was with them till 1918, and included sewing and drawing in the curriculum.

Ruth's memories of the wartime years include seeing airships overhead and such details as the frustration of not being able to use their new car as it was up on blocks because petrol was rationed. Food was also rationed and there were queues for everything. Milk was not sold in bottles but dipped out of a big can at the door into jugs. The NZ 'billie' was unknown. The beach at Bournemouth was good for swimming at any stage of the tide and there were still bathing machines where you changed into your modestly concealing bathing costume. The whole bathing machine was on rails and was then towed by a horse down into the water so you could step straight into the water and swim in private, away from prying eyes. In later years, they undressed on the beach in little striped umbrella tents.

In 1919 she went to Morlands School, a private school which catered for 'the daughters of gentlemen', about 40 girls altogether. Here she rejoiced in painting lessons, and won a Royal Drawing Society certificate. In December 1921 Ruth and Freda were confirmed by the Bishop in St Augustine's Church, and in 1922 they returned to NZ. Ruth was very upset at the prospect of leaving all her friends. She had been only four years old when they left NZ and retained no real memories of it at all. However their landlord now wanted their house for his own use, and so on 5 October 1922 they sailed on the *Port Kembla* of the Cunard Line.

This was basically a cargo ship with limited passenger accommodation, i.e. twelve passengers — and their family made up eight of them. Ruth is sure they had a cargo of gunpowder. Anyway they had a peaceful voyage, no seasickness, and with such small numbers they got to know all the officers well. The voyage to Sydney took six weeks and they stayed there for three weeks before carrying on to Auckland on a new sister ship, the *Port Hunter*.

In NZ they travelled by train to Palmerston North to visit their grandparents, and stayed with her father's sister — Aunt Edie and Uncle Dudley Opie. They also met her mother's sister Jeannie whose husband, Sir Thomas Duncan, was jubilant — his horse Laughing Prince had just won the Auckland Cup!

The family decided to settle in Auckland, and for a short while they stayed at 'Shirley', a boarding house on the corner of Dominion and Onslow roads. Freda and Ruth started school at St Cuthbert's which was then based in a cluster of small houses in Stokes Road, just round the corner from the Mt Eden shopping centre. They had a long walk every day up Valley Road to school. Her siblings Marjorie and Geoffrey went to the Valley Road Primary School (now Mt Eden Normal Primary). To Ruth's English eyes the buildings were terribly ugly — 'wooden houses painted a horrible khaki sort of colour with rusty corrugated iron roofs'. The roads were rough and lined with fennel instead of wild flowers.

As they were staying in a boarding house, they had to have their lunch with the boarders at school. You could tell the day of the week by

and decided to leave on the first favourable opportunity, which he did shortly afterwards, receiving an engagement as a stonemason to proceed to Auckland under twelve months' contract to the government. He arrived in the struggling and straggling settlement on the southern shore of the Waitemata Harbour on 1 March 1841, on his 34th birthday, and lost no time in making himself acquainted with the environs.

Of the places he saw, the Epsom valley with its lovely surrounding hills, its fertile soil and charming glimpses of the Manukau Harbour, appealed to him greatly. He said that was where he would like to live when the time came for him to retire from active business life. The opportunity to buy land there soon came, for in April of the following year (1842), a triangular subdivision was offered for sale by public auction. The boundaries of this block were: Manukau Road on the east, Pah Road on the west and Mt Albert Road, its base, on the south. At that time roads only appeared as such on maps and plans; in reality there were narrow dirt tracks through scrub and fern and none had received its official designation. The lots offered differed in size and increased in area as the triangle widened.

The section at the apex, comprising approximately six acres, was bought by William Greenwood for £43. 5s. 8d. The cost of clearing, fencing and ploughing brought his outlay up to nearly £300. While the section was being fenced, advantage was taken to straighten the southern boundary, which was very much out of alignment towards the Manukau Road frontage. The result of that adjustment was a triangular piece of land large enough for a building site outside the boundary fence so that, ever after, the area of the holding was less the outside section.

Later my grandfather gave this to one of his daughters, who lived in the home erected thereon for many years. It was from there that two of her daughters went out daily to attend Mrs Glover's school, and her son walked down to Trollope's school in Symonds Street, Onehunga. The house is still in the same position but is now in a dilapidated condition and the section is smaller.

The Greenwoods Corner property remained in the possession of my grandfather and the trustees of his estate until 1909, when it was sold to a syndicate for subdivision. As one of his sons purchased a property in

Greenwoods Corner and the southern part of Epsom

by Ella Greenwood, daughter of the first owner

William Greenwood, whose name is perpetuated in the Auckland suburban area known as Greenwoods Corner, was born at Brighton, England, on 1 March 1807. His great-grandfather and his grandfather were master masons and builders in Bradford, taking large contracts, and his father Joseph, born in 1774, joined the family business after leaving school.

Later, when England was fighting for her existence in the war with France, every able-bodied man was required to help defend his country, so Joseph got leave of absence in order to join the Royal Horse Artillery. It turned out to be a long leave. His regiment was stationed at Brighton (where he married in 1797), Island Bridge and Ipswich. He gradually worked his way from junior officer to senior rank, and on the field of Waterloo was made a temporary colonel. Two of his sons, John and William, were born at Brighton but John died there in 1812. After Waterloo, with his wife and four children, Joseph returned to Bradford and re-entered the family business. He died there in 1832.

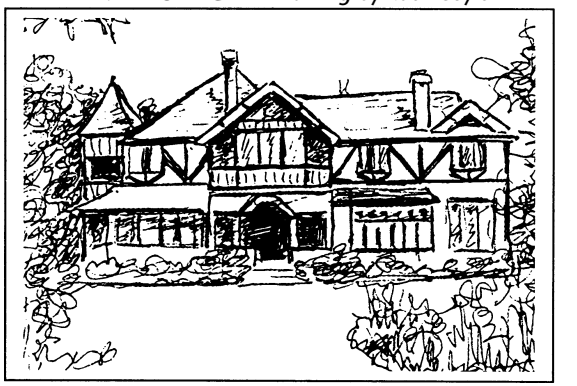
His son William, after leaving school, studied civil engineering for a time before learning the trade of a stonemason. Later he became a member of the firm of Leach, Greenwood & Brayshaw. In the winter of 1838 he retired at his own request, as it was his intention to emigrate to one of the colonies and he knew that the preparatory work required to be done before departure would take a great deal of time and thought. He was influenced to try his luck in New Zealand by the glowing accounts given of the colony in a paper published in London fortnightly by the New Zealand Land Company.

He left England in September 1840, in the ship *Slains Castle* for Wellington, where he intended to settle, and arrived there on 21 January 1841 with his wife and four children, the youngest of whom was born on the voyage. Soon after his arrival there was a severe earthquake which alarmed the residents greatly. He came to the conclusion that Wellington was not the place where a stonemason would have much business

the menu. Prunes and rice, tapioca, blancmange, lemon sago, etc. Ruth hates milk puddings to this day.

In March they moved into their own home in One Tree Hill. 'Aratonga' was an old English-style house with three acres of garden which had been part of the Logan Campbell Estate. It had been built by Southey Baker, and Captain Whitney had lived there before the Innes family took over. The front drive was in Aratonga Avenue, the back gate in Wheturangi Road. Today it is a rest home called 'The Manor' and the grounds have been built over. In 1923, however, it had a grass tennis court and an old driveway lined with large oak trees with bulbs planted in the grass beneath. An iron plaque under one oak stated that it had been planted by the Duke of Edinburgh in 1869. Unfortunately this did not save the tree from being cut down with the others when the grounds were subdivided.

ARATONGA *Drawing by Ruth Coyle*



Aratonga

In Ruth's own words:

> A feature of the house was the large panelled entrance hall with a wide stairway at the far end. On the upstairs landing you could look down into the hall below. In one corner, actually under the stairway, was a fireplace around which we would sit in the winter evenings. It was in this house that I learnt to do paperhanging. Not an easy house to paper either, as the ceilings were very high. I also had to help paint the window frames.
>
> Dad said, as I was the artist, this would be a good job for me but I hated this kind of painting. I was taking a painting class after

school hours at St Cuthbert's, but the teacher was so hopeless, only giving us pictures to copy off calendars or such like, that after the first term I gave up and went to the Elam School of Art on Saturday mornings, where I got very good tuition and was soon learning to paint in oils. Mrs Bolton was my first teacher and then Ida Eise. Later I also took a life class on Friday evenings and soon got over my initial embarrassment when confronted with nude models.

The Innes family settled down to life at Aratonga, the children walking to school each morning via Ranfurly Road and Epsom Avenue to Mt Eden. The plane trees along the footpath had just been planted and were just slim slips of trees. On Sundays they all trekked off to St George's Church in Ranfurly Road which, being a smallish wooden building, never seemed to Ruth to be a real church. They lived in Aratonga for two years and then, quite by accident, the house was sold.

A land agent came to see Dad and said he knew someone who wanted to buy it. Dad said he didn't want to sell but then a few days later the land agent came pestering him again and jokingly Dad said that he would sell it for ten thousand pounds, which was double what he had paid. That was a lot of money in those days. To Dad's horror, a day or so later the agent rang to say he had sold it to Mr Bloomfield! Where were we to go? 'Back to England,' suggested Dad, but then Judge Ostler's house at 24 Victoria Avenue, Remuera, came on the market — a two-storey rough cast house with three acres of land, two thirds in bush with a little stream at the bottom of the gully. We all slept out on sleeping porches, which Dad later had glassed in with sliding windows. There was a billiard room and I became quite a good player. We also had a tennis court made so we could have tennis parties on Saturdays. This was my home until I left to get married in 1932.

24 Victoria Avenue, Remuera

In 1925 there was a bad epidemic of polio and the schools were closed until May. Ruth hated this time as she was expected to help with the

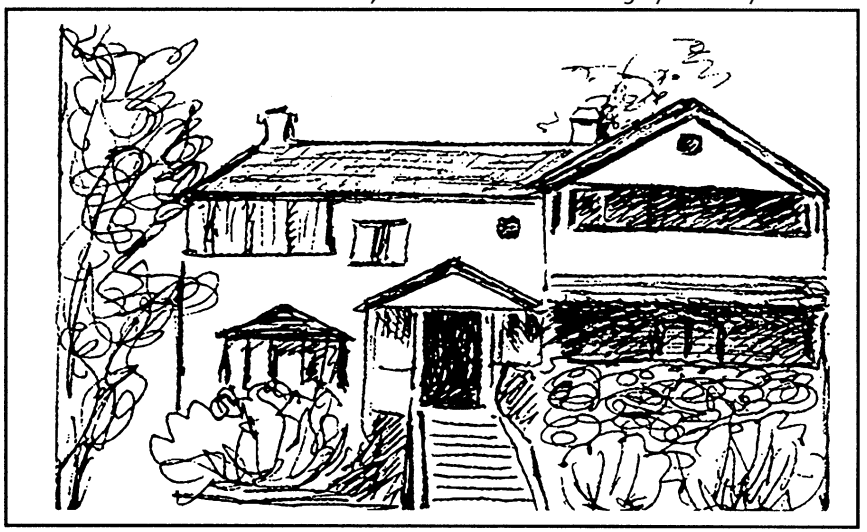
would be complete without the Rawleigh man. Three or four times a year there would be a knock at the door and the Rawleigh man (Mr Litherland for many years in Mt Eden) would be there, presenting for sale a basketful of bottles ranging from Anti Pain Oil and Rawleighs Ready Relief to almond and vanilla essence.

Looking back on the 1970s and 80s, they were characterised by a real tendency to over-prescribe. New drugs were appearing regularly for mental and physical problems and the doctors greeted them with delight. Unfortunately their long term effects made many of them a cure that was worse than the disease. Thalidomide immediately springs to mind, but there were far less dramatic ill-effects felt in thousands of households as doctors prescribed addictive sleeping pills like halcyon, and phenergan was handed out in quantity to mothers to sedate babies. High blood pressure remedies like oxazepam and diazepam also proved to be totally addictive. Sulfa drugs and antibiotics were greeted as miracle workers, but overuse has drastically reduced their effectiveness. The ready availability of steroids has also proved a mixed blessing. You didn't need a prescription to go to the chemist for painkillers like paracetamol or panadeine, but the homebake experts later found them so useful as the raw materials for illicit drugs that some chemists now refuse to stock them.

Through most of the 20th century, doctors' waiting rooms were full and they still made house visits. At the start of the 21st century, neither is true. The population is so much more mobile that many people have no regular family doctor. Instead they tend to treat themselves if possible (often with information gained from the internet) and in desperation go to the hospitals' A & E departments.

Nothing is better for a sore throat than a lemon and honey drink. Once you went into the garden and picked your own lemons. Now most people rely on technology to pack the effective ingredients in a lozenge or powder which they buy from the chemist or supermarket. The ingredients and effect sought are the same. It is the method of delivery that has changed.

24 VICTORIA AVE, REMUERA *Drawing by Ruth Coyle*



housework, sweeping and dusting, doing vegetables, and the family mending. With a family of eight, there was always a lot of mending as there were no synthetic materials and everything wore out. Socks were all wool and always seemed to have huge holes in heels and toes.

At the same time that they moved house, St Cuthbert's moved from Mt Eden to the new school in Epsom, nearer Aratonga. Unfortunately they were no longer there and Ruth now had a two-mile walk every day from Victoria Avenue. During the epidemic's enforced holiday, she would walk over to the new school and help Miss Dorothy Yates set up the science room. She did the lettering on all the cards for the geology specimens; very good practice.

Freda and Ruth had been Girl Guides in Bournemouth so were delighted when one of the earliest groups was started at St Cuthbert's. They were both patrol leaders, and by the time Ruth left school, she had 'All round Cords' and a lot of badges. She loved school and didn't seem to mind the homework which took most of the evening to do. However, she hated history and found it hard to concentrate on what she was reading. She passed her Intermediate Exam in 1925, and in her final year was made a prefect and passed Matriculation with a Special Pass.

Full time study at the Elam School of Art was very different. No more picking and choosing. They had to do everything: geometrical drawing, design and perspective, still life, antique lettering, plant form, modelling, even metalwork. They all wore artists' smocks with big pockets. Money was tight as she only had one pound a week from a Trust Fund set up by her grandfather McKelvie which had to cover clothes, art supplies and tram fares. The head of the school was an Englishman, Archie Fisher, who strove to imbue in his students the notion that art is not just pretty pictures.

Nevertheless these were happy days and they worked and played very hard. Socials were non-alcoholic with music supplied by a gramophone. She remembers having pigs' trotters for supper and candles stuck in bottles for lighting. There were quite a lot of dances, mostly church socials or small dances in town, St Cuthbert's Old Girls Dance, University Ball. Every year the Society of Arts organised a big Arts Ball in the Town Hall. They were 'fancy dress' and quite important events. At Milford was a dance hall by the beach built like a great pirate ship. Twice Ruth stayed in Pupuke Road with a friend and they walked the three miles there and back to a dance, which of course ended sharp at midnight. Another good dance venue was the Orange Hall in Nelson Street.

Tennis was a major social event on Saturdays, and on Sundays the family would walk to church at St Aidan's where the Rev Harry Coleman was the vicar. Ruth taught Sunday school in the afternoons while the boys found more important things to do — like sailing. In the evening they sat around the piano at home and sang.

In those days you would always wear a hat when you went out. It was 1928 before her mother allowed her to get her hair cut short. That was the year they went camping on Waiheke Island — one tent for the girls and one for the boys. There were very few people living there and they had a wonderful time living in bathing suits with artists' smocks over the top. However they missed the ferry back and her father was not amused at having to make another trip down to the ferry buildings to pick them up.

Ruth's first job was as a part-time art teacher at St Cuthbert's — for

chickenpox were still expected to strike sooner or later. Tonsilitis and glandular fever were about the most serious illnesses likely to be encountered, apart of course from the polio epidemics.

The present young generation is largely unaware that there were regular polio epidemics every five years. In NZ they struck in 1916, 1921, 1925, 1932, 1937, 1943, 1947–8, 1952–3, 1955–6 and 1961. Each resulted in an average of 800 cases of paralytic poliomyelitis. The iron-lung cabinet respirators made famous by June Opie's book *Over My Dead Body* were invented in the 1937–8 epidemic and were in common use. I remember the 1947 epidemic, which forced the closure of all schools in the North Island from 29 November till 19 April 1948. Correspondence lessons were published in the local papers and the work taken by parents to school to be marked there by the teachers. Children were kept at home and not allowed to play together in order to reduce the risk of infection.

The Salk Vaccine was introduced to NZ in 1956 but the Department of Health failed to get 100% coverage, and another epidemic occurred in 1961 with 214 cases and seven deaths. The Oral Polio Vaccine (OPV) was introduced and by July 1962, 97 per cent of all school children and 80 per cent of the general population had received two doses. There have been no cases of infection in NZ from wild virus since, but the vaccination continues. Polio's place as a threat has largely been taken by meningitis but it is hoped that the introduction of a vaccine in 2004 will reduce its threat also.

Old-style bathroom medicine cabinet

Photo: Jeanette Grant, 2005

Homeopathy has only come into its own in New Zealand since the 1980s. If the phrase alternative medicine was used earlier, it was more likely to have referred to iridology, chiropractic or acupuncture, while no mention of NZ home remedies

purchased to help with the inevitable coughs and colds. I believe many of them had a fairly high alcoholic content. One really old favourite, which still survives today, was Friars Balsam. This nineteenth century medication is an alcoholic tincture of bezoin, styrax, tolu balsam and aloes. It could be taken internally, one drop on a teaspoon of sugar, or inhaled one teaspoon in a bowl of very hot water — as a very effective vapour to relieve nasal and chest congestion.

In the days before fizzy drinks were common, we made our own out of orange cordial and Andrews Liver Salts. Olive oil was found in the medicine cabinet, not the pantry. Headaches and migraines alike were treated with aspirin, cold packs on the forehead and darkened rooms.

Calamine lotion was another basic standby. Thick and pink, it left a soothing coat on the itches of chickenpox, insect bites or sunburn. Suntans were still considered desirable and about the only protection felt necessary was baby oil or coconut oil. Sticking plaster came in long strips and had to be cut to size. Bee stings were met with the blue bag from the laundry; wasp stings responded to dettol. At school, children sat through educational films on Bertie Germ and the importance of washing hands. The school dental nurse disapproved of flavoured toothpastes and recommended using a mixture of salt and soda instead.

House sections were a half or a quarter of an acre in size, and most gardens contained at least a lemon tree. Many grew their own vegetables which were valued for their freshness and freedom from chemicals. Plants like comfrey were common; boiled (like mint) in with other vegetables, it was good for helping heal broken bones.

One thing was missing at school in mid-century. Nits. My mother had been a country primary teacher and told horror stories of coping with them in the classrooms of the 1920s. Imagine my dismay when my own children were at school in the 1970s and started bringing home warning notes about outbreaks of nits. I had thought they were totally a problem of the past.

Some things had improved dramatically by the 1940s. The Plunket Society was giving invaluable advice and support to new mothers. The Triple Vac had been developed and almost removed the threat of diphtheria, whooping cough and tetanus, but mumps, measles and

which she was paid five shillings an hour. This compared well with the one shilling to one shilling and sixpence paid for most jobs, but it only brought her in a little over two pounds a week. Her parents expected her to leave Elam now she had a job, but it was free and she continued to go on the three days when she was not teaching.

Life became complicated by the fact that she had met Arthur Coyle at several dances and got on very well with him. However, he was an electrician and his father was a simple Irish bootmaker which her parents felt was not good enough for her. She was made to promise not to see him for a month in the hope that she'd soon forget about him. These were miserable days, and they decided that they would get engaged on her twenty-second birthday. Arthur came round with a ring but her father would not have him in the house! Ruth ended up walking out with him and staying with friends. When she went home to pack a suitcase her father threatened to cut her off without a penny.

This was 1931, and the Depression was really biting. St Cuthbert's found it necessary to reduce her hours of teaching. Arthur had a workshop in the Mt Eden shopping centre and Ruth would help out by minding the shop, although the stock available was very limited. She made a little money by making fancy light shades with parchment paper and painting designs on them. They sold by size from one shilling to two and sixpence.

It was nearly a year before she returned home, but the breach with her parents was not really healed. Arthur had bought a section at Hillsborough but there was no road to it. The Coyle family had a bach in Hill Street, down by the sea. It was decided that they would pull it down and build a proper house with a spare room so the family could still come out for weekends. Arthur got a loan of £400 from a building society, and the builders started. He did all the electrical work and plumbing himself. They set the wedding date for the 9 January by licence at St George's Church in Ranfurly Road to avoid having the banns read three times at St Aidan's. Even though Ruth was back living with her parents, and left from there for the church, they were not present at her wedding. They borrowed Arthur's father's car and had a three-day honeymoon camping on the Coromandel Peninsula.

Ruth kept on teaching but had less time for classes at Elam. Then after about six months she found she was pregnant and had to give up teaching. After her mother's first reaction, 'You can't afford it', she started making baby clothes and arranging for a nurse to come in for the first two weeks after the baby arrived. Margaret Ruth arrived early on Anzac Day 1933, and Ruth was made to stay in bed for ten days after. This was the custom almost guaranteed to make you weak when at last you were allowed up! Both sets of grandparents made a great fuss of the baby and her parents finally accepted Arthur, although it took many years for him to get over the hurt. A second daughter, Lynette Helen, was born at home in July 1937, and much later in January 1948, their only son Ewen arrived.

The garden there in Hillsborough was clay soil but Ruth enjoyed gardening, and the sale of cut flowers to Queen Street florists, together with occasional orders for wreaths or bouquets, all brought in welcome shillings. Arthur worked very long hours but business was not good, as many people were unable to pay their bills. In 1938 he reluctantly accepted a job with the power board as an operator at a substation. It was shift work but it brought in a regular pay packet. With £10 a week, Ruth felt rich and could even save. In Ruth's own words:

> All through the hard times of the depression and the war years I had continued with my art work. It was very important to me as I hated housework. About 1935 I had joined with a few other students in forming the Rutland Group which flourished for about 23 years.

The name came from Rutland Street where Elam was located, as most of the members were Elam graduates. Its members included staunch feminists and pacifists. Women smoked and wore trousers. This radical artists' collective met monthly to critique each other's work and get feedback from visiting artists. Members had to produce six artworks in any media each year to qualify to exhibit at their annual exhibition in the Art Gallery.

doctor, who said that she had a congenital heart weakness which would probably cause her to die in her thirties! Officialdom's reaction to this report was to make her stop her university studies and excuse her from physical education, but they did not stop her finishing her teacher training. When she was in her seventies and looked back on those years, she was convinced the fainting was caused by nothing more than malnutrition. A healthy appetite was considered unladylike and women were proud of their tiny waists achieved with the help of tight lacing. She was at that time living at Titirangi and faced a mile-long walk to the station, a train ride to town and then a further walk from the station — all this on a cup of tea and a slice of toast! Teresa had put her into corsets at the age of twelve, and she wore them all her life as her spine was so weakened by the dependence on the corset that she could not endure more than four hours unsupported. (At the age of twelve, I won my first major argument when I refused to wear them.)

When my mother and her sisters had families of their own in the 1940s, they continued to treat them with the home remedies they had grown up with. In spring, we were dosed with sulphur and treacle to clear the blood. In winter we had daily Vitamin B1 pills and halibut oil capsules to take to prevent colds. If you were unlucky enough to have one leak you really regretted it, as they tasted vile. Not however, she assured us, as bad as the castor oil she had been forced to take as a child. We wore bodices in winter for warmth, and if you had a cold, one remedy was to wear under the bodice a layer of Warne's Wonder Wool, sold by chemists, which looked rather like felted candyfloss. It must have been medicated in some way, but I don't remember that it did much good.

The medicine cabinet still contained old favourites: sal volatile, liquid paraffin, glycerine, menthol and wintergreen liniment, boracic acid, petroleum jelly, castor oil and eucalyptus. Cuts and scratches were treated with iodine, acriflavin or mercurochrome, while witch hazel was the answer for bumps and bruises.

There were proprietary brands such as Sloans Liniment and Vicks Vapor Rub. Cough medicines such as Baxters Lung Preserver (sweet, red and hot), Formula 44, Buckleys Canadiol Mixture (revolting) were

Taking iron literally meant swallowing as much powdered iron as would fit on a threepenny bit. The most awkward part was trying to get it down without letting it touch your teeth, as it would stain them black.

Coming to New Zealand had been a real culture shock for Teresa. As a farmer's wife, she had had an accepted status and was accustomed to a steady supply of girls from the village to be trained as housemaids and nursemaids. Once in the colonies she had had to learn how to do everything for herself. In 1908 the family returned to the UK for a couple of years. They had to have smallpox vaccinations and my mother Olive, who was only a year old, had a huge scar from this for the rest of her life. On the voyage she fell very ill with erysipelas, a disease you don't hear much about today, and which is dismissed in textbooks as being easily treatable by antibiotics. Without the antibiotics it could be fatal, as there was a real risk of it leading to septicaemia. What is it? *A superficial bacterial infection usually caused by Strep A bacteria . . . which can spread with alarming rapidity as it invades the subcutaneous lymphatics. The symptoms are fever, pain and swollen lymph nodes*. It most commonly affects the legs or face and Olive must have been affected in the legs as she was told she had to learn to walk all over again.

Then in 1917 came a new threat, the Spanish influenza epidemic. My grandfather William Stubbs had been called up and was in camp at Trentham. Teresa took the three girls and went to stay with cousins on a farm where she thought they would be safe from infection. The day after they arrived the host family fell ill, and before long my twelve year old aunt, Evelyn, was nursing her own mother and sisters, her aunt, uncle and cousins plus two farm labourers. The District Nurse called in a couple of times to tell her she was doing a great job, but otherwise she had to cope on her own. All survived but for some weeks they were completely out of touch, and Teresa and William had no idea whether the others were alive or dead. As it happened, he was the only man in his hut not to fall ill, and had spent the weeks nursing and burying his friends.

When she left school, Olive went pupil-teaching for two years until she was old enough to enter Auckland Teachers College in 1925. She was prone to faint very easily, and the college insisted she went to their

> Arthur had built me an outside studio where I spent a lot of time painting and doing fabric printing. I painted portraits of most of the family. At one time, I was on six different committees: Rutland Group, Society of Arts, Gallery Associates, Botanical Society after 1947, Howard League for Prison Reform and Wolf Cubs. Arthur was a foundation member of the Speleological Society so we had lots of weekend trips to the Waitomo area. In 1959 I had an exhibition of cave paintings along with Dennis Knight Turner, who at that time was a guide at the Waitomo Caves, and Theo Schoon who showed some of his rock paintings. We also went to night school classes doing short courses in geology and philosophy and became members of the Archaeological Society.

After the war Arthur studied up on electroplating and went into partnership with a friend as Bostock & Coyle with a workshop in Onehunga. The business was a success and soon outgrew the premises. However, Ruth had saved enough to buy a property in Penrose which the firm then rented from her. Business grew and diversified to the point where the partners split it into two distinct firms in adjacent buildings. The Coyles became Penrose Electroplaters. The next years were very busy but much more secure and by 1961 business had improved to the point where Arthur was able to retire at the age of 56 to the role of managing director. On 16 May they sailed on the *Patris* from Sydney to England for a long anticipated trip.

As well as art works in various media, Ruth has written children's books and poetry. After Arthur died she continued to live alone in St Andrews Road, but in recent years her sight has deteriorated to the point where she has had to give up her art.

However, in 2002 an exhibition of the Rutland Group's work gave a rather belated public recognition of the diversity and richness of the work the group produced, and a book about the group, *We Learnt to See: Elam's Rutland Group 1935–1958*, was published in 2004.

The RSR garden railway in Kimberley Road

by Joyce Roberts & Jeanette Grant

In the 1930s and 1940s the miniature railway built by Frank Roberts in the garden of his Kimberley Road home gave pleasure to many visitors. Today there is no trace of its existence on site and few people left who remember it. His daughter, Joyce Roberts, wrote a book called *Steam in Miniature: Frank Roberts and his garden railway*, which was published by A.H. & A.W. Reed in 1976. His nephew K.R. Carpenter has given permission for this summary to be published in answer to questions put to several members of the historical society.

In her introduction, the author says:

> He built a score of miniature NZ locomotives, and many carriages and rolling stock, all perfect replicas of their prototypes. His garden railway was complete with cuttings, embankments, viaducts and culverts, streams, trees trimmed to scale, tunnels, sidings, houses and station buildings. At night the tiny lights from buildings, signals, carriage windows and locomotive headlights made the scene a memorable miniature wonderland. The realism of this railway won world acclaim.

Who was Frank Roberts? He was born at Ohaupo on 22 January 1882 but spent most of his childhood in Mercer, where his father Vernon Roberts was postmaster. The Mercer railway yards were his playground and inspired a lifelong love of 'iron-horses'. As a boy he delighted in building mechanical toys, windmills, waterwheels, etc, and in 1896 he was apprenticed to an Auckland firm of cabinet makers. He attended night classes and became a skilled craftsman, but once his five-year apprenticeship was complete, he forsook cabinet making and joined the Railways on 31 Dec 1900 — as a cleaner. He boarded with an uncle in Melford Street, Ponsonby, and had a workshop under the house where he experimented with electricity. In 1901 he qualified as a 2nd grade fireman and in February 1906 passed his exams for 1st grade fireman and acting-engineman. In August that year he qualified as a locomotive and traction engine driver.

In June 1963 he had a third coronary thrombosis, and died on the 26th of that month. In his daughter's words, 'No one could look at the models Frank made without greatly admiring and respecting the maker for his work, output and ideas. The models are the tangible proofs of his outstanding ability in the model engineering field, but the worth of his precepts and personal influence is incalculable.'

Household medicine

by Jeanette Grant

Today we routinely expect medical miracles to order. We carry medical insurances and complain bitterly when we have to pay for services we were brought up to expect as our right as members of a Welfare State. Conventional medicine is becoming increasingly complex, invasive and expensive, but apart from major accidents and potentially fatal illnesses, every household still has to cope with minor ills and spills not worth bringing to the attention of an expensive professional. A First Aid kit is standard equipment in all businesses, most homes and even in many vehicles, while basic First Aid training is required in many jobs. How does this differ from the home remedies of the past?

My grandmother Teresa Stubbs had three daughters between 1902 and 1907, a time when childhood diseases posed a far more serious threat than now, a century later. As well as expecting to have to cope with mumps, measles and chickenpox, there was a very real threat to life from such common complaints as croup, diphtheria, rheumatic fever, scarlet fever, scarlatina and whooping cough. Tuberculosis (also known as phthisis) was only too familiar to the family, as it had killed Teresa's father in 1882 at the age of only 38, and two of her older sisters also died in 1886 and 1894 in the UK.

Family tradition says that a friend of hers was engaged to a chemist who thought that she looked anaemic and recommended that she 'take iron unless she wanted to go the same way as her sisters'. Teresa took the advice and in due course made sure that her daughters took it too.

twenty years of its life he had a number of boys assisting him with the construction and maintenance of the track and landscape. Over 100 small trees had to be kept clipped into shape to stay in scale; the brass track needed cleaning every weekend with sandpaper; all the buildings, animals, people, luggage, etc, had to be placed in position and if necessary connected to the electrical wiring. Then of course, they all had to be safely put away till the next weekend. Railwaymen were particularly keen to sit in the operator's seat and 'drive' the engines. The various switches were placed in the same relative position as the controls on the footplate of a real locomotive.

By 1932 so many visitors were coming to see the railway that a visitor's book was started. It ultimately held over 1800 names — including Princess Te Puea and Minhinnick. Photos and articles appeared in the papers here and overseas, and the RSR featured in books on model railways. The National Film Unit even filmed it for their *Weekly Review*.

The models were superb; every detail was complete, even to minute working oil cups and a set of miniature tools, including an oilcan that actually worked. In November 1940 the model K 900 was put to practical use at a board of inquiry investigating a derailment at Mercer the previous month. As it was an exact replica it was used to clarify a number of technical terms and important points in the hearing.

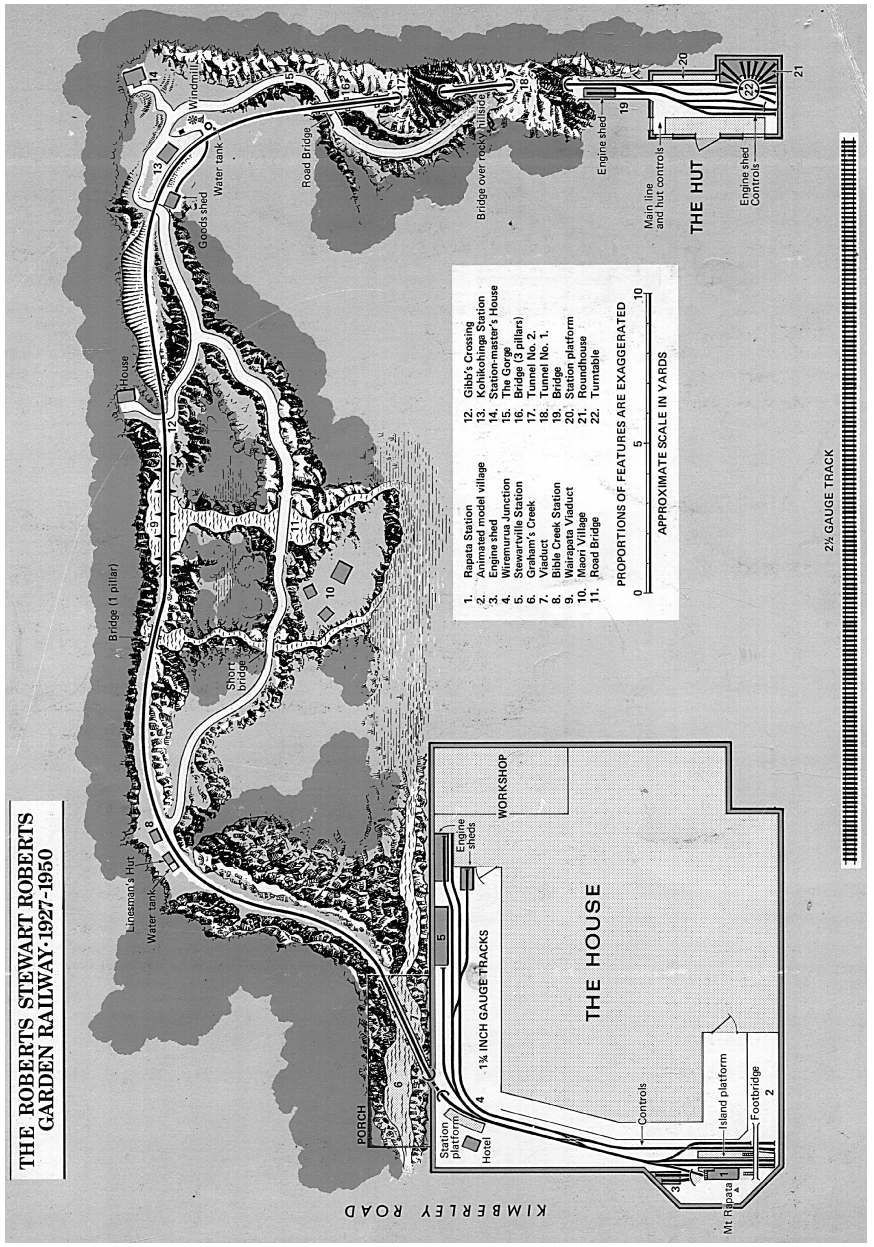
As he aged, the question of the maintenance of the garden railway and the future of his models worried Frank. He realised that they were valuable both from a constructor's and from a historical point of view. However in those days there was no MoTaT, so in 1950 he took the radical step of selling the collection to the NZ Government. By that time in consisted of 14 locomotives, 14 passenger cars, 7 brake vans and 28 goods wagons. Ten years later he added a new model of A 66 to the collection. For many years they were regularly exhibited at shows throughout NZ, but the constant handling and travelling proved rather hard on them. From 1955–61 he was engaged by the Railways Department to repair them and bring them up to museum condition. This was a slow process as angina was curtailing his activities and arthritis was making it increasingly hard for him to manipulate the tools needed for the fine work.

His model making started in 1903 with a working steam model of Wa 288. It took three years to construct and was a faithful replica on a 5/8 inch scale. It was 21 inches overall with a 1 inch stroke and 5/8 inch bore. The boiler worked at a steam pressure of 45–60 pounds to the square inch, and the airbrake operated at 5 pounds, coupled through to the cars by a tube. His brothers Jack and George built an Addington A carriage and van, and the whole train, with model station and track layout on a lorry, won first prize in a Labour Day display in Auckland c.1906.

In his years with the Railways, Frank became very familiar with the lines to Morrinsville, Helensville and Taumarunui. He also needed to become an expert at emergency repairs. The driver was always responsible for the running condition of the engine allotted to him and it was his duty to write in the repair register all repairs that needed attention. Unfortunately the Auckland shed was then suffering from a lack of reliable engine fitters and the repairs were not always satisfactory. Frank used to regale the family with stories of disaster narrowly averted and major repairs carried out en route in the dark. In later years he wrote down many of his railway stories, and not long before he died passed them on to his friend Gordon Troup who arranged to have them published under the title *Vintage Steam* in 1967.

All this time his inventor's brain was ticking away, and over the years he applied for several Letters Patent, e.g. a hose coupling and a folding window, which became standard both here and overseas. Many of his ideas were so far ahead of their time they had to be re-invented later, e.g. judder bars, electric cars. He also thought up a simulator for teaching motorists how a train reacted when braked, a water spray at level crossings to warn motorists of an approaching train, a safety lock for hydraulic lifts. In 1905 he converted a bicycle to a motorbike and in 1910 he built his own car. His parents' house in Thames was fitted with a flying fox to carry mail, papers and groceries up the hillside to the house.

In 1916 he made an animated village. On a three-foot base he built a cottage, windmill and engine house. Turning a crankhandle moved the vanes of the windmill and seven figures, including grandma rocking in a chair. He was always busy carving figures, making wind machines, and other novelties.



The garden railway was situated at 26 Kimberley Road, Epsom, opposite what is now the Kimberley Road entrance to the Epsom Community Centre.

Map from back cover of *Steam in Miniature: Frank Roberts and his garden railway* (see opposite).

However in 1917 he left the Railways to join his brother Jack's electrical business (V.J. & F. Roberts). In 1926 he became a foundation member of the NZ Association of Radio Transmitters, and was elected to the committee of the newly formed Auckland Society of Model Engineers.

In 1927 the construction of the RSR miniature garden railway began. The initials were those of the main personnel — Frank Roberts chief mechanical engineer, Bill Stewart official photographer and historical consultant, and George Roberts district engineer. A wooden 21.5-inch gauge track was laid from under the house, out through a tunnel on to Falls Bridge over Graham's Creek, through Cliff's Cutting and down the eastern boundary via Mackley's Bridge spanning the Wairapata River and ending in a station yard and mock tunnel entrance. Originally Wa 288 was used but it was later decided to build electrically driven models of steam engines.

Over the years this project grew larger and more elaborate. During the

F 164 and a mixed train at Kohikohinga station.
The stationmaster's house is in the background.

Photo by W.W. Stewart in: Roberts, Joyce, *Steam in Miniature: Frank Roberts and his garden railway*, A.H. & A.W. Reed, Wellington, Sydney, London, 1976, p.54.