

Newsletter. Winter 2025

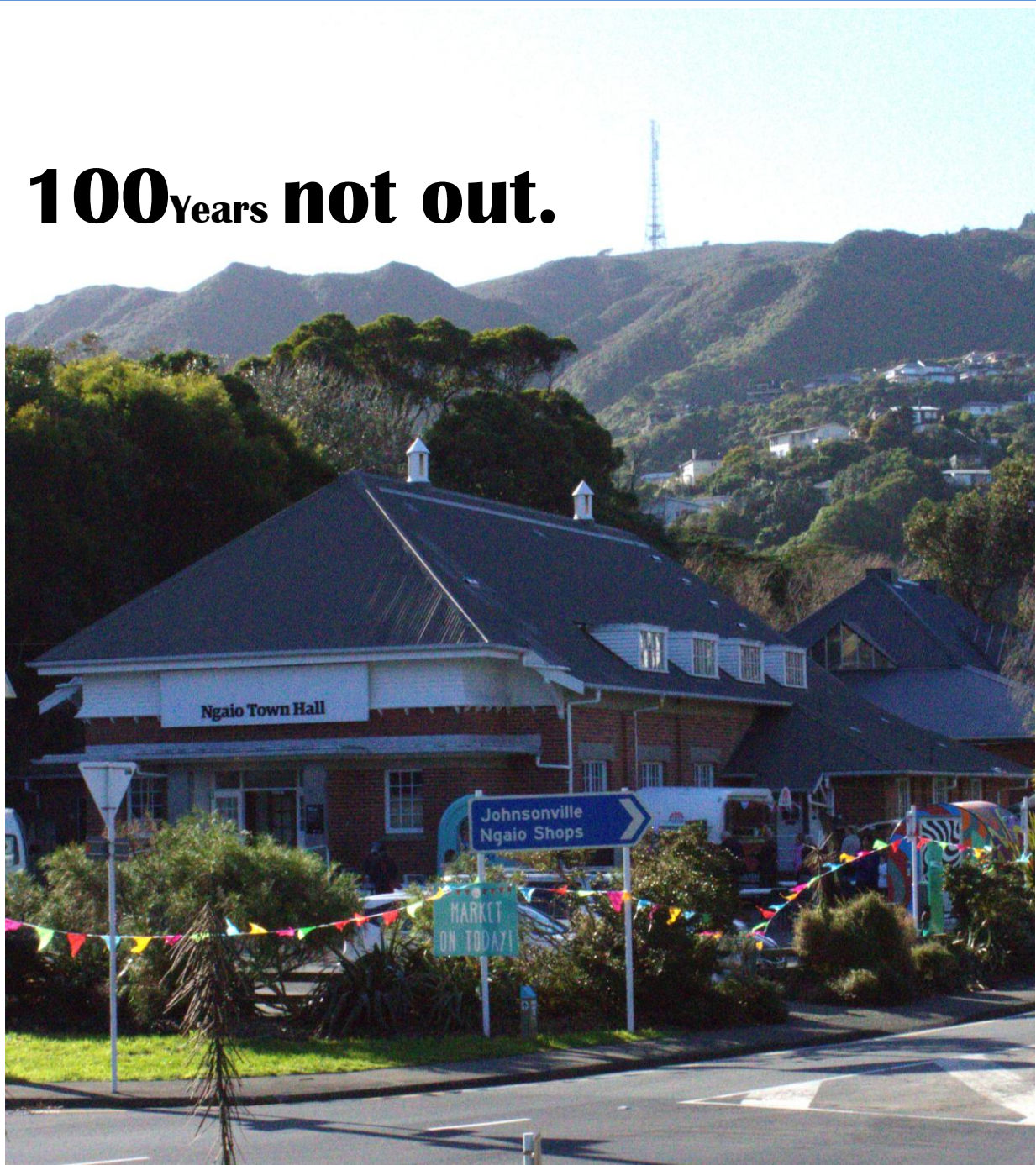
Onslow Historical Society

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86 Khandallah Road. Wellington. 6035

100^{Years} not out.



Dear Members

Please come to the 100 year celebration of the Ngaio Town Hall this Sunday 3 August at 2pm. Together with the Ngaio and Crofton Downs Residents Association, OHS is hosting a (free) community afternoon tea.

Our patron, Hon Peter Dunne, will be the key speaker and follow the Buzz's Buzzing Brass Band welcoming all.

The hall was funded by a special community rate/tax and the debt paid off. Community halls, pools and parks are a treasured part of community life and everyone is welcome to mark the important role played by the Ngaio Town Hall for the past 100 years.

Thank you to so many for attending the AGM recently, where the committee was reappointed by acclamation and their solid contribution recognised.

Our special vote of thanks went to Chorus for their ongoing generosity in making the Khandallah Automatic Telephone Exchange (K.A.T.E) building available to us (and without cost).

The AGM acknowledged how incredibly grateful the society is to Chorus for its ongoing support, and in particular our thanks to Brendon Sue and other senior Chorus staff. We'll stay in touch with Chorus about their future disposal plans given our long term interest in retaining our little museum in the building if we can.

John Martin gave a great talk at the AGM and is aiming to produce an Onslow Historian on the topic. (see report next page)

Our next talk is on 14 September, 2pm, by Kelvin Nairn about his Pacific travels by traditional sailing canoe

A walking tour of Ngaio's built heritage sites will take place on Monday 27 October during the Wellington Heritage Festival.

Meet at KATE at 10.30am.

I hope you've been enjoying my Local History columns in the Independent Herald (free online). It's good to see so many of you at our events and best wishes to each of you.

See you on Sunday,

Felicity Wong

President

Real Estate? **YIP** Call Team **Yip** 04 477 4450, William Yip.

---Sponsor of OHS ---



A.G.M 2025

Following the Society's AGM on 11 June John Martin gave a PowerPoint presentation on the creation of Ngaio and Khandallah by road and rail – 'Native potato ground to suburban bliss'.

Maori did not occupy Wellington's bush-clad northwestern hills but used them for access to the coast at Makara and for their cultivations. The New Zealand Company opened up the area through the Porirua Road in the early 1840s, encouraging settlement, bush clearance and farming, particularly dairy farms serving the growing town of Wellington. The road, with a steep gradient high above the gorge, then wound its way along the hills overlooking Ngaio (Cockayne Road) before going over Box Hill and continuing towards Johnsonville (Burma Road).

The establishment of the railway line in the mid-1880s along the gorge and through the valleys of Ngaio and Khandallah stimulated the first (White) subdivision in Khandallah, followed by the Hannah subdivision in the 1890s. A growing population required a better road, constructed lower in Ngaio Gorge at the turn of the twentieth century, wending its way through the Ngaio valley adjacent to the railway. Obstacles to its completion included the gunpowder magazine at the bottom of the gorge and negotiating with dairy-farming families in the valley.

The railway cutting (in the vicinity of Box Hill station) had severed the link of the 'old' Porirua Road as it joined with the Kaiwharawhara bridle track leading into Khandallah. This was eventually overcome by the Box Hill overbridge more than fifteen years after the railway had gone through.

Improved road communication sparked off a wave of subdivision of farmland throughout Ngaio and Khandallah in the 1900s, providing the beginnings of the suburban environment as we know it today. These subdivisions included Crofton, Trellissick, Ngatoto, Simla, Sunnybank, Lochiel, Colway and Cashmere. The PowerPoint show, based on a range of vivid and colourful maps and plans, provided a visual essay on the dramatic changes entailed in the transformation towards suburbia.

Upcoming Events

Sunday 3 August. 2.00pm

Ngaio Town Hall Centenary.

Viv Chapple is looking for volunteers to help. Phone 0273 087 133

Sunday 14 September at 2.00pm.

Pacific Canoe Voyaging: Kel Nairn will speak about his experiences voyaging with Jim Siers. 2.00pm at KATE

Monday 27 October Labour Day walk.

This year's OHS Wellington Heritage Festival walk will be around historic Ngaio.

Starting at K.A.T.E at about 10.30am and will be approx 2 hours, ending with an optional refreshments stop at Cafe Villa from 12.30pm.

The next committee meeting will be held on Saturday 16th August 2025, 3pm.

Wanted HOME THEATER Surround Sound Speaker System for K.A.T.E

Moving to a smaller house or flat? We can take your old system off your hands

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Quiz: Who—What-Where-When?



Stan Pillar

A memorial tree was planted for Stan Pillar on Sunday 12 July 2025 at Trellissick Park. It is a beautiful Totara



From left: Kevin Pillar, Murray Pillar, Claire Bibby (representing OHS) and Keefe van Musscher (Representing OHS).

Thanks to Chorus for being a major sponsor of O.H.S

Family history at KATE

Exploring family history and stories is a great adventure.

A young woman on the bus said she'd been given her family records by a great aunt whose first comment was how much she looked like her nana.

With fair skin and auburn hair I thought she'd enjoy visiting contemporary Ireland, a dynamic place of young, energetic people, some sharing similar features.

A friend traces her family to a 16th century identity and his portrait shows a facial characteristic shared with one of her children.

Last weekend Catherine Ruth gave a talk to the Onslow Historical Society about researching family history and geneology.

She's a retired librarian with a long career in research using public records.

Catherine said that Māori oral history had been proven to be reliable in accurately recording many generations of tupuna (ancestors).

Many resources on line mean it's easy to find family connections and delve into the history, and communities in which family members lived.

Start with the structure of a family tree around self, and spread to eight great grandparents.

Because one of her grandmothers was illegitimate it had been harder for Catherine to find her great grandfather's identity.

Further research using DNA had narrowed him down to one of four brothers who had lived nearby.

Family photos are important and it can be sad finding they had been disposed of.



She mentioned her joy in a relative supplying a photo of her grandfather as a boy when she otherwise had no photo of him.

Understanding geography is useful as place names have multiple spellings or have changed.

Local body amalgamation erased old street names and district records could be held far away (eg New Plymouth's are in Auckland's archives).

There's a big difference between "Palmerston" in the South Island and "Palmerston North".

Wellingtonians were lucky to have access to the National Library records, many of which were on line.

Always check the spelling and linguistic changes.

Her ancestor who was a "chandler", a ship's provisioner, and leather workers used to be called "cordwainer".

Deciphering old cursive handwriting in old church records and official documents was detective work.

Young people are astonished by beautiful old handwriting.

Damage to documents can be difficult.

A mouse had made a nest in Catherine's box of pictures and papers.

"Archives", she said, "are only as good as the conditions in which they are kept".

There are four main online sites to help with genealogical research: Ancestry.com; Find my Past; My Heritage; and Family Search.

Find My Past has lots of records from the UK, while My Heritage tended to focus on European and Scandinavian records.

None of those sites were free and Catherine warned against taking up a "7 day free trial" that turned into a costly credit card subscription when you forget to cancel it.

Family Search is operated by the Church of Latter Day Saints, and is free she said.

Put your user name and password somewhere memorable, as forgotten log in details are common.

Appallingly, New Zealand is the only western country to have destroyed its census records, leaving a big hole for family researchers.

Some census records had been destroyed in Ireland's "uprising" civil conflict, and others in the "Blitz".

Searching Births, Deaths and Marriages was however very useful.

Papers Past is handy if your family was "rich enough to have placed a birth notice" at the time.

Papers Past also "brings colour" to family histories by reporting community celebrations and misdemeanours like speeding fines or public drunkenness.

Catherine discovered her grandfather had numerous tattoos from researching his navy records, and it brought to mind her mother's later censorious disapproval of tattoos.

New Zealand's suffrage petition records of the thousands of women who signed was another useful source, and for some illuminated cases of illiteracy by signing with an "X", a story in itself.

Save your information to a platform and share it with other family members.

Catherine discussed the problem of wrong information being logged, or of people "hijacking" your family story for their own.

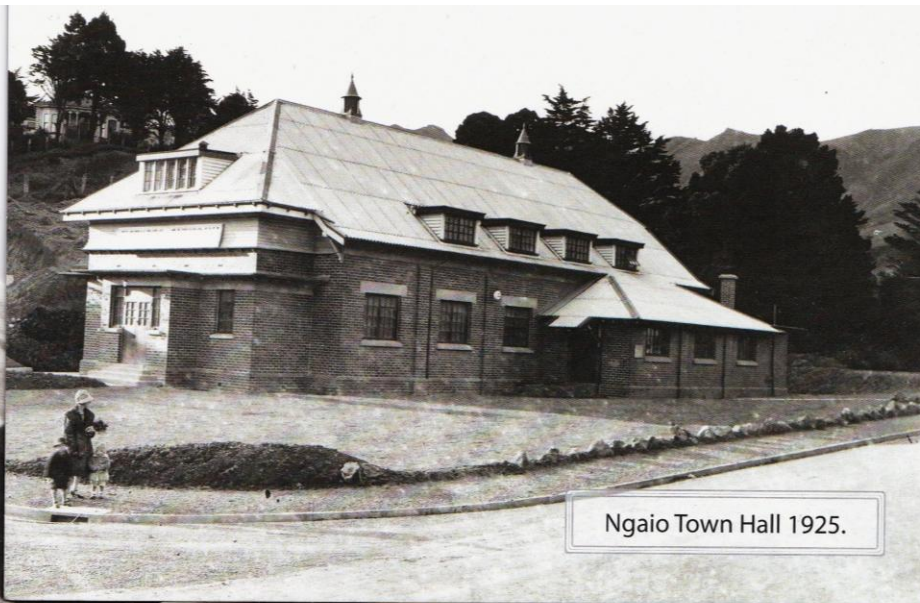
Careful research and credible referencing was needed, and sometimes enquiry of others about where their information had come from.

"Make it a true record" she said.

In closing, Catherine noted the large amount of material held by OHS and asked that it be digitised and shared so people could know what's there. 86 Khandallah Rd is open 1-4pm Sundays, all welcome.

"Kia whakatomuri te haere whakamua" (I walk backwards into the future with my eyes fixed on my past.)

Felicity Wong. The Independent Herald

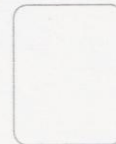


Ngaio Town Hall 1925.




Farming at Daisy Hill Farm Johnsonville We

Photo from Onslow Historical Society Collection



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Ngaio Town Hall Centenary

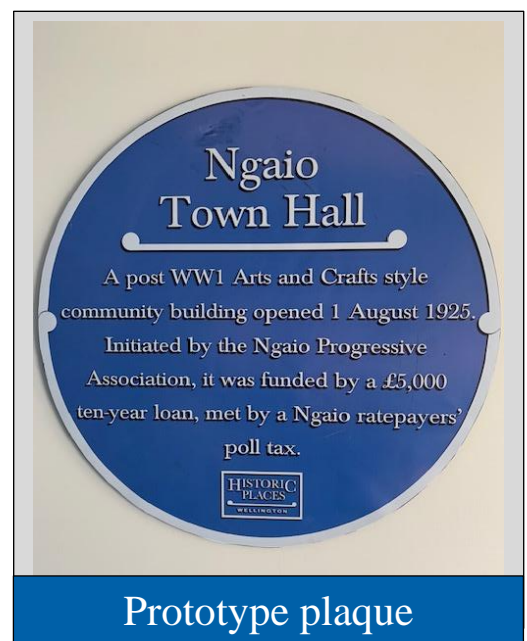
Blue Plaque Update.

Fundraising is continuing apace. We have about \$1500 towards the \$1700 so we are not far away (NCDRA 12-0086781-00 with your name and Blue Plaque as the reference). After the template was presented to the recent AGM (having been checked by two committees!), at supper there was much intellectual debate about the use of the term “poll tax”, and elsewhere whether there was a hyphen missing. Ideas were tossed back and forth, and phones consulted. The upshot has been that “poll tax paid by the ratepayers of Ngaio” has been changed to [loan] “agreed to and repaid by Ngaio ratepayers.”

It was a pleasure to be part of a discussion driven by goodwill and the desire for the best possible outcome. All sorted now, but it will be touch and go if we get the plaque proper by the event. Sunday 3 August 2pm Ngaio Town Hall. Bring a plate if you are willing.

Kind regards

Viv



Quiz Answer's

The Little Red Engine

Khandallah Park c1960

Sir Frank Kitts (Mayor)

One for the bulldozer

In my recent video on the The Terrace I talk about the Gordon Wilson Flats.

The flats were built in 1943-44 and it was the last Social building to be built by the Ministry of Works.

This Building has long divided public opinion. Designed for modernist social housing, the flats were once seen as a bold response to urban housing needs. Since being declared an earthquake risk in 2012, the building has stood empty and has of course, deteriorated badly.

Whilst heritage groups have fought to preserve its status as an important piece of Wellington's architectural and social history, the cost of restoration and lack of use have made its end inevitable.

The Minister of RMA Reform, Chris Bishop has confirmed he will amend legislation to remove the building's heritage status, a significant step that will enable Victoria University,

its current owners, to

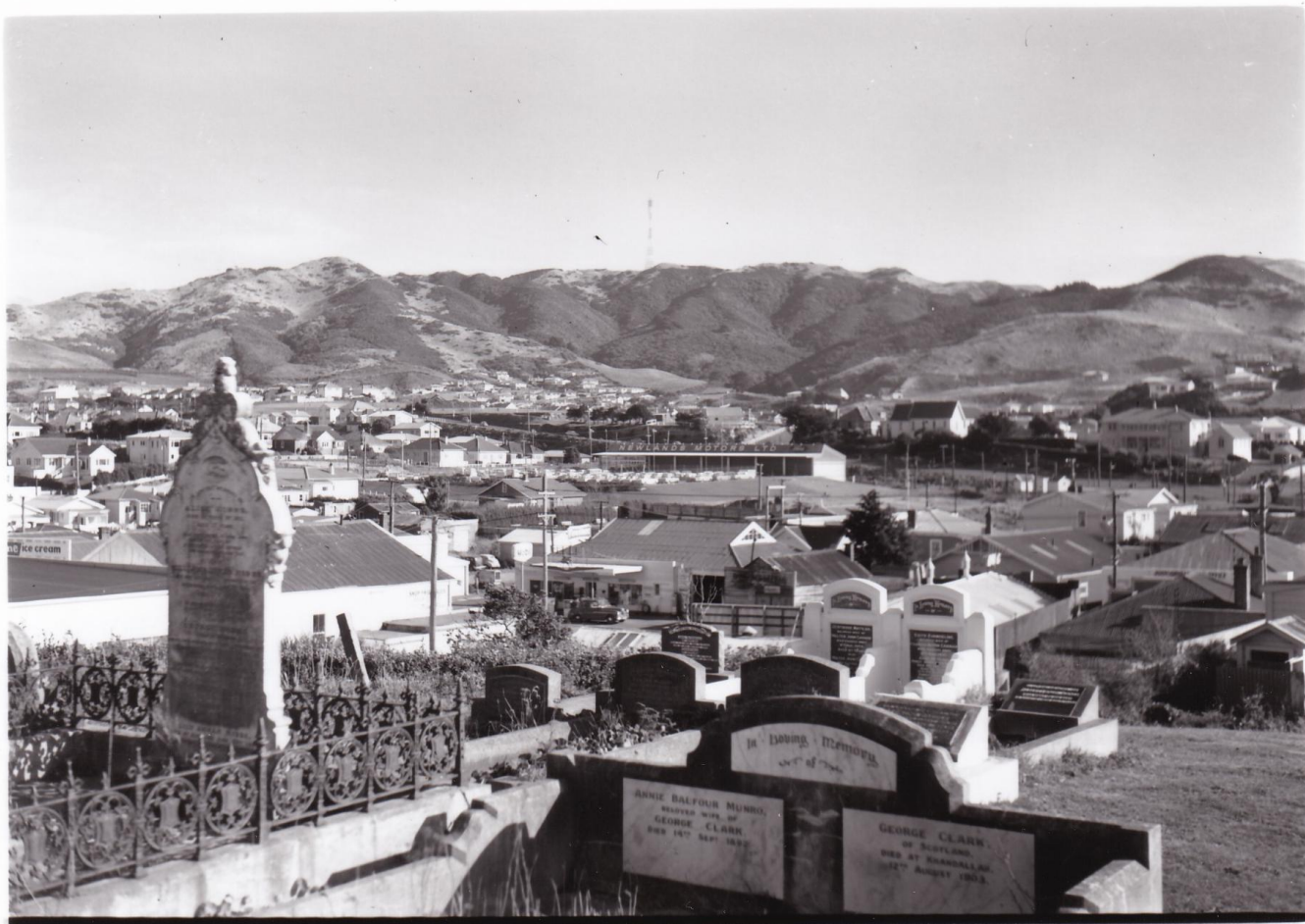
demolish the building and

replace it with new student accommodation.

By George



Photo from By George. The Terrace. video



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This photo (S156) is from the Bill Main collection, held in the O.H.S archives at KATE.

It is taken from the Methodist church cemetery at Johnsonville looking west to the old Newlands Motors site and Catholic church on Broderick Road.

The Methodist church was on Johnsonville Road and opened in 1846. It served the Northern Suburbs community.

In 1970 the Methodist church became part of the Johnsonville Uniting church, and the site was sold, and the church demolished in 1973.

The cemetery is on Norman Lane and was not sold. Many early settlers are buried in it. Recently volunteers have spent time cleaning it up.