



**Issue 29**  
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# Auckland Council Archives

## Ngā Pūranga Kaunihera

### Auckland begins at the Archives

Kia ora and welcome to the December 2025 issue of the Archives' newsletter. We aim to keep you up to date with our mahi at Council Archives, as well as sharing interesting stories we uncover working with Auckland's records. We wish you a Meri Kirihimete and a Happy New Year from everyone at Council Archives.

Please note our shutdown dates over the holiday period. Archives for Central Auckland: closing at 5pm on Thursday 18 December 2025, re-opening at 2pm on Monday 5 January 2026.

Archives for North, South and West Auckland: closing 5pm on Thursday 18 December 2025, re-opening (by appointment only) Monday 5 January 2026.

#### In this issue:

- Conservation Technician Grace Lange writes about creation of the Louis Adolphus Durrieu Reserve at the base of Maungawhau / Mount Eden
- Team Leader James Armstrong examines the history of the Orapiu Road Board, the smallest local authority in New Zealand
- Archivist Heléna Lunt writes about the discovery of more legacy council records and the process of accessing their content for any potential addition to our Archives
- Conservator Rosemary Coppell describes the varied and unexpected tools utilised by her profession
- Senior Archivist Owen Gordon delves into a recreation centre proposal that was never built
- In staff news, we are pleased to welcome our recently appointed Conservator Rosemary Coppell and a new volunteer Dr Tara Pond. We also farewell André Taber, a volunteer with an extensive history here at Council Archives.

# The Establishment of the Louis Adolphus Durrieu Reserve

Grace Lange, Conservation Technician



Figure 1. Louis Adolphus Durrieu Reserve, c. late 1980s, MEB 026/1, Auckland Council Archives

Positioned at the eastern foot of Maungawhau/Mount Eden is the unassuming Louis Adolphus Durrieu Reserve, this tiny, charming greenspace has connections to some of the earliest colonial development in the Mount Eden suburb. The Auckland Council Archives holds evidence of its history and continued legacy following the donation of Pauline Durrieu. The reserve is located at 303 Mount Eden Road and although it is easily accessible to the public, it is surpassed in popularity by the dominating volcanic cone above. This is only in its favour as a quiet area for the undisturbed enjoyment of the Victorian style planting. The reserve was formerly part of the Durrieu family's private garden at their home.

Louis Adolphus Durrieu (1831-1913) built his homestead in 1875 where he lived with his wife and children. One-hundred-and-fifty years later, the villa remains standing behind the reserve and is one of the four original colonial homes of Mount Eden borough. Mr Durrieu was Auditor General for the Auckland Provincial Council; Auckland Council Archives holds a delicate glass-plate portrait of him taken around 1900. To preserve this photograph, it has been digitised for viewing and the glass plate is kept in the archives' dedicated cool storage.

Daughter of Mr Durrieu, Miss Pauline Durrieu (b. 1889) was a loyal Mount Eden resident who lived at the homestead for 95 years. When she sold the villa in 1984, she gifted a 26-perch (approximately 800m<sup>2</sup>) section of the property to Mount Eden Borough Council for public use. The reserve was to be in memory of her father and employ a formal garden theme that reflected the original period. This significant donation was not out of character for Miss Durrieu, who lived a life of dedication to her home and community. She grew up in a time when it was common for young women to remain in the family home to help run the household, which she did until she was 22. After World War One she studied by correspondence to become a teacher. To work between multiple schools in Auckland she learnt to ride a horse and then to drive with her purchase of a Model T Ford. In retirement Miss Durrieu continued to give generously, over 11 years she sewed an estimated 6000 garments for CORSO (Council of Organisations for Relief Services Overseas), and supported the Dickens, Horticultural, Leprosy, and Tree societies of New Zealand. In 1902, at 13 years old she was awarded the best in class sewing prize. In the same year she showed a pelargonium in the Auckland Horticultural Society youth contest, expressing an interest in plants from a young age. Previously, at 11 years, her flower bouquet was highly commended in another youth contest.



Figure 2. Louis Adolphus Durrieu, c. 1900, MEB 024/1es, Auckland Council Archives



In accordance with the wishes of Miss Durrieu, Mount Eden Borough Council landscaped the reserve to replicate a garden of the late 19th century. In colonial New Zealand, the Victorian tastes of England were imported and often reflected in the garden designs of homesteads. The council kept many of the established plants and bulbs to incorporate into their redesign. These include silver birch, philadelphus, and hibiscus, which remain present today. The new additions to the landscaping are in keeping with Victorian garden expectations, with lavender, rosemary, rambling rose, and albizia being prominent. The features of the reserve that help it resemble the original period are plenty, a meandering pathway leading to a pagoda, two garden seats, and a circular planting; an unbroken lawn that achieves cohesiveness between the garden beds, shrubs, and trees; and large plants to conceal the borders, creating the illusion of more space beyond. The planting scheme allows for visitors to feel emersed in the reserve, rather than as a landscape for solitary viewing.

Many Victorians enjoyed retreating to their gardens to be alone in meditation or accompanied by a loved one, making the reserve an ideal memorial place for Louis Adolphus Durrieu. Today, the reserve is cared for by Auckland Council Parks and Community Facilities.



Figure 3. Development of the Louis Adolphus Durrieu Reserve c.1987, MEB 026/1, Auckland Council Archives

#### Sources:

Deed of gift for Lot 3 DP 27593 [Louis Adolphus Durrieu Reserve, 303 Mount Eden Road], 1986, Mount Eden Borough Council legal documents, MEB 182/10t, Auckland Council Archives

Mount Eden Borough Drawing Office photo library album, 1969-1987, pages 8-10, MEB 026/1, Auckland Council Archives

Louis Adolphus Durrieu Reserve planting plan, 1986, Mount Eden Borough Council engineering plans, MEB 003/456, Auckland Council Archives

Louis Adolphus Durrieu, c. 1900, Mount Eden Borough Council photographs, MEB 024/1es, Auckland Council Archives

House and garden at 305 Mount Eden Road, n.d., Mount Eden Borough Council slide collection, MEB 027/103, Auckland Council Archives

'Children's Section', *Auckland Star*, 24 November 1900, p.3

'Gardens', *Auckland Star*, 21 November 1902, p.2

'Mount Eden School', *Auckland Star*, 22 December 1902, p.5

'Move Severs 95-year Link', *New Zealand Herald*, 21 December 1984



## The Smallest Local Authority in New Zealand: The Waiheke Island Orapiu Road Board, 1921-1955

James Armstrong, Team Leader Archives Management



Photograph of Orapiu wharf in 2013 by Luke Harvey commissioned for the Waiheke Local Board Walkways Project (The Wire: Auckland Council's image library)

The Orapiu Road Board was Waiheke Island's first local authority, established in 1921 for a tiny area in the south-eastern corner of the island. The board was later acknowledged to be New Zealand's smallest local authority. All members of Orapiu Road Board were elected unopposed throughout its 35-year existence because the number of nominations never exceeded the number of vacancies. Almost all properties at Orapiu were holiday or retirement homes. The Orapiu Seaside Hotel adjoining the beach and wharf by 1937 offered its guests simple pleasures such as picnics, rowboats, fishing and tennis. Board members, who were often from the legal and accounting professions, served without salary yet their duties were far from onerous. Over its lifetime, the board met on average less than four times a year for meetings that might last no more than 30 minutes. The board originally had seven members, reduced by 1949 to only four, which represented more than half of Orapiu's permanent residents, surely a national record for the greatest participation in local government for any area of the country. Meetings were held in Auckland's CBD rather than on Waiheke and the board's main business was striking of annual rates and employing temporary staff by the day for repairs to the area's unmetalled roads. By 1936, the modest sum of £10 per year was set aside for what must have been basic roadworks. The clerk to the board was usually an accountant employed part time.

The area governed by the board was less than half a square kilometre and it had about four kilometres of unmetalled roads. Subdivision of land had begun at Orapiu in 1916. Subdivisions were private ventures and landowners were responsible for their own roads and wharves. Even as late as 1951, there were only 72 separate rates assessments for Orapiu. The board's principal asset and the area's sole amenity was the Orapiu wharf, built in 1915 at the expense of the man who became the board's first chairman and gifted by

him to the board in 1928 on condition that it assumed responsibility for future maintenance. Together with a crane and winch and a truck on rails, the wharf was valued in 1949 at £1025 (equivalent today to about \$97,000). Passengers paid threepence (today around a dollar) per trip and until 1950 wharfage on cargo landed on or shipped from the wharf was free. Some assistance with the upkeep of the wharf, which was sometimes damaged by visiting ferries, came from central government grants or subsidies. In 1953 the board raised a loan of £600 (about \$44,000 at today's prices) to fund urgent repairs to the wharf.

A proposal by the Minister of Internal Affairs in 1938 to disestablish the two Waiheke local bodies, the road boards for Orapiu and Ostend (also constituted in 1921), and create a county council for the whole island met with local opposition and failed to progress. The Orapiu Road Board chairman argued that the minister's plan to create arterial roads on the island to service a conveniently placed main wharf would prove too expensive and that residents preferred to rely on the regular steamers that visited most of the bays around the island.

By 1947, the Western Waiheke Road Board had succeeded the Ostend Road Board to govern an area of some 2670 hectares, about a third of the whole island. Apart from Orapiu, there was no local government for the remainder of Waiheke. Western Waiheke had an average winter weekend population in 1949 of 2000 people, more than half estimated by the board to be permanent residents. This swelled during Christmas or holiday periods to between 4000 and 5000 people. There were a little under 50 kilometres of metalled roads, but the district lacked many services, including water supply, drainage or sewerage, electricity or gas, footpaths and street lighting. The board periodically collected rubbish so that it could be buried. It had seven employees to work on the roads and at other labouring tasks and carried out building inspections. It also operated a cemetery and had several quarries, domains and recreation reserves.

Reporting to the Local Government Commission in 1949, Orapiu Road Board noted that Orapiu had a permanent population of six people, doubling or more than doubling at the weekends to an average of some twelve to fifteen. Orapiu even then offered residents little in the way of basic creature comforts – it had no water supply, drainage or sewerage, and lacked gas or electricity, apart from that provided by batteries or private generators. There were no collections of nightsoil or refuse, nor any street lighting or fire protection service. Unsurprisingly given its size, there were also no parks or reserves. Auckland Electric-Power Board received permission from the board in 1951 to include Orapiu in its plan to reticulate Waiheke Island. Rocky Bay was the first part of Waiheke to be supplied with electricity in 1953.

At the request of Western Waiheke Road Board, the Local Government Commission in 1954 produced a re-organization scheme for Waiheke Island. Initially opposed, Orapiu Road Board subsequently accepted that adoption was in the best interests of its district and of the whole island. The scheme abolished Orapiu Road District, altered the boundaries of the Western Waiheke Road District to encompass all of Waiheke Island and re-named it Waiheke Road District. First elected in May 1955, Waiheke Road Board became the island's sole local authority.

#### **Sources:**

Orapiu Road Board minute book, 1921-1955, ORP 001/1, Auckland Council Archives

Orapiu Road Board: Statement of Factual Data for the Local Government Commission, 1949, Ellerslie Borough Council Local Government Commission 1949 reports, ELB 147/26, Auckland Council Archives

Waiheke Island [outlying] Road District valuation roll, 1951-1957, ORP 002/1, Auckland Council Archives

Western Waiheke Road Board: Factual Evidence Submitted for Consideration of the Local Government Commission, 1949, Ellerslie Borough Council Local Government Commission 1949 reports, ELB 147/28, Auckland Council Archives

Western Waiheke Road Board Gazette notices, 1947-1955, WWR 001/1, Auckland Council Archives

Auckland Council District Plan – Hauraki Gulf Islands Section – Operative 2013, annexure 1a – The History of Human Settlement of the Islands (pp.1-6)

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'Proposed Holiday Resort: Orapiu Bay: New Wharf Opened', *New Zealand Herald*, 18 December 1915, p.5

'Smallest Local Body: Waiheke Island Area', *New Zealand Herald*, 31 January 1940, p.10

'Smallest Local Body?', *Central Hawke's Bay Press*, 18 November 1949, p.2

'Waiheke Control: County Council Plan: Protest by Road Board', *New Zealand Herald*, 13 July 1938, p.18



## Bute Road Records Recovery September 2025

Heléna Lunt, Archivist

Nearly 15 years post-amalgamation, we did not expect to uncover many more legacy council records. So, we were excited when a colleague contacted us in September about the 'Records Room' at the Hibiscus and Bays Local Board building in Browns Bay. With the building scheduled for demolition in a few months, we quickly headed to Browns Bay to investigate.

Before any material could be brought back to the archives, we needed to understand what we were dealing with. What were these records? How were they connected to council business? And most importantly, did they hold archival value? This initial stage is known as ad-hoc appraisal. As a local authority archive, we are legally required to preserve specific records under the Public Records Act 2005 and our ALGIM Retention and Disposal Schedule. However, not everything must be kept, so part of our job is to make that distinction.

Led by Senior Archivist Harvey Brahne, we worked through the records shelf by shelf, carefully identifying what needed to be retained and what could be securely disposed of. It is important to note that we always err on the side of caution during this process. If there's any uncertainty about a record's value, we retain it for more detailed assessment.

After this initial sorting, we transported the selected material back to our office to continue the appraisal process. This involved checking for duplicates in our existing holdings and identifying items that should be transferred to other authorities – for example, school plans that belong at Archives New Zealand. We then created an accession record for the material. This brief inventory ensures the records are accessible while they await further processing and formal incorporation into an archival series.

There were some real treasures amongst the boxes. Highlights include a large 1945 cadastral map of the East Coast Bays Borough Council area, and vivid concept plans for a proposed Civic Centre at Browns Bay. This experience also provided a valuable opportunity for our archivists to be mentored by Harvey in the practice of archival appraisal.



Plan of proposed Civic Centre for Browns Bay (AUC 2025 034)



Bottom section detail of the cadastral map

## Staff News



We are delighted to welcome Rosemary Coppel to the Archives team as our new Conservator.

Rosemary brings extensive experience from roles at Invercargill City Council, Archives New Zealand, Tūhura Otago Museum and London Metropolitan Archives. She has also worked as a freelance conservator, holding positions at Trinity College Dublin and the Alexander Turnbull Library. Since 2022, Rosemary has served as the Otago and Southland representative for the New Zealand Conservators of Cultural Materials (NZCCM). She holds an MA with merit in Conservation (Books and Archival Materials)

from Camberwell College of Arts, University of the Arts London (2019), and a BA (Hons) in History and Classics from Te Herenga Waka - Victoria University of Wellington (2015).



We also welcome a new volunteer, Dr Tara Pond.

Since graduating from the University of Auckland and AUT, Tara has worked as a researcher, co-ordinator and educator, holding positions with AcademyEX, the Christchurch Call Advisory Network, Malatest International Research, as well as lecturing roles at AUT. She is passionate about supporting and advocating for marginalised communities throughout Aotearoa, with expert knowledge in the areas of sexuality and gender, Rainbow communities and intersectionality. She is currently working towards a Postgraduate Certificate of Information Studies from Te Herenga Waka -Victoria University of Wellington.

Portrait by @portraitsbyemyy on Instagram.

Finally, we say goodbye and a big thank you to André Taber, who has been volunteering in Archives as an indexer and transcriber since 2013.

Over the years, we have admired André's talents and enthusiasm as a writer, researcher and historian, with a particular interest in food and the development of ethnic cuisines in New Zealand. He has also worked extensively in the media world, having held roles with TPL Media, Sky Television and TVNZ. André leaves us to further his career as Technical Writer with Gentrack Ltd (Global). We wish him all the best.





# Unexpected Conservation Tools

Rosemary Coppel, Conservator



Portable conservation kit in metal pencil case

The conservation profession is often described as a craft that uses both art and science to preserve cultural materials of historical significance. There is a lot of examination, documentation, decisions on how to treat and house items, and choosing the best tools and materials for the best results.

Some conservators are ‘magpies’ who adopt tools from different industries and professions for their own projects. As a result, unusual and unexpected utensils can end up in the conservator’s workshop.

*Bamboo skewers* – These are just like the ones you might use to secure a fruit kebab. Cotton swabs are used in large quantities for a vast array of treatments, so it is much cheaper just to buy cotton wool and create your own.

*Bone and Teflon shapes* – ‘Shapes’ is a broad term to describe these hand-held tools. Most are used to help smooth down something, help bend something, or aid inspection by manoeuvring things around. Using bone or Teflon is important as their very smooth finish limits friction or abrasion, as well as fitting comfortably in the hand. They also vary in weight and thickness, making them suitable for even the most delicate items.

*Syringes* – While more often seen in medicine, syringes are used regularly in a conservation laboratory. They can be used to deposit diluted adhesive deep into a crevasse to help bind together lifting or delaminating surfaces in areas where brushes would not fit, or in places where brushes would cause more damage.

*Razor blades and scalpels* – Cutting tools are useful, but they are rarely used in close contact with an item. Sometimes you may use a scalpel or a razor blade carefully to scrape away aged glue or an old repair. Most of the time you would be preparing and shaping repair material, trimming the end of a new lining, or carving out a piece of gossamer-thin tissue to patch over a hole.

*Chopstick-holders* – These holders are perfect for resting your brushes or swabs when they are sticky with either paste or cleaning solution. Brushes are unlikely to roll off, holders can be any size, and they also look incredibly cute on a work bench.

*Tweezers* – Whether you are extracting broken leather pieces from the spine of a book, gently reattaching a loose paper fragment, or pulling a piece of thread back into place, odd-shaped tweezers are a go-to tool.

*Tacking Iron* – Looking much like a soldering iron with a spoon welded to the end, tacking irons are used for textiles but are also fantastic for softening adhesives. This is particularly good when trying to remove old



Assorted Teflon and bone shapes



pieces of sticky tape or glue, by either heating the tape, or heating metal tools to help pry them off. Hair dryers are also very popular for the same reason.

***Linen counter*** – Rather like a small, foldable microscope, this was originally designed for close inspection of textile fibres and can help examine a surface to identify manufacturing processes, types of damage, and interesting inclusions or materials.

***Bamboo sushi mat*** – A sushi mat is a superb toolkit/storage container for thin brushes or narrow tools. It is easy to sew in some thin pockets as an inner lining, and the rolled mat can then hold a portable kit for very basic paper conservation.

***Dahlia sprayer*** – Traditionally used for lightly spritzing flowers, a dahlia sprayer creates an ultra-fine mist of water, diluted solvent, or whatever else you put in it. When you need to introduce moisture or extra humidity to a paper item, this is one of the gentlest ways of dampening them. Most laboratories have more than one.

***Bridge-aid dental floss threaders*** – Adopted from the dental industry, these are very flexible loops of soft plastic that can be used to guide thin threads through narrow channels. They act like a needle and are handy for sewing around very thin or stiff pages with less friction and without widening existing sewing holes.

***Porcupine quills*** – These are used in several different branches of conservation as a double-ended utensil for helping to mold or adjust very small areas of repair, almost like a small spatula. There is a pointier and a more blunt end, and the quills are hollow keratin that can be very long, rounded, and narrowed to a fine tip. They are admittedly hard to acquire unless you know a handy supplier, so some conservators make-do with a nice double-ended knitting needle.

Conservation tool kits are acquired over a lifetime and reflect different workplaces, different people, different techniques, and different ways of working. While some tools are used all the time and others bought for specific treatments, every studio is a treasure-store of odd bits-and-bobs that have a purpose and a story behind them.



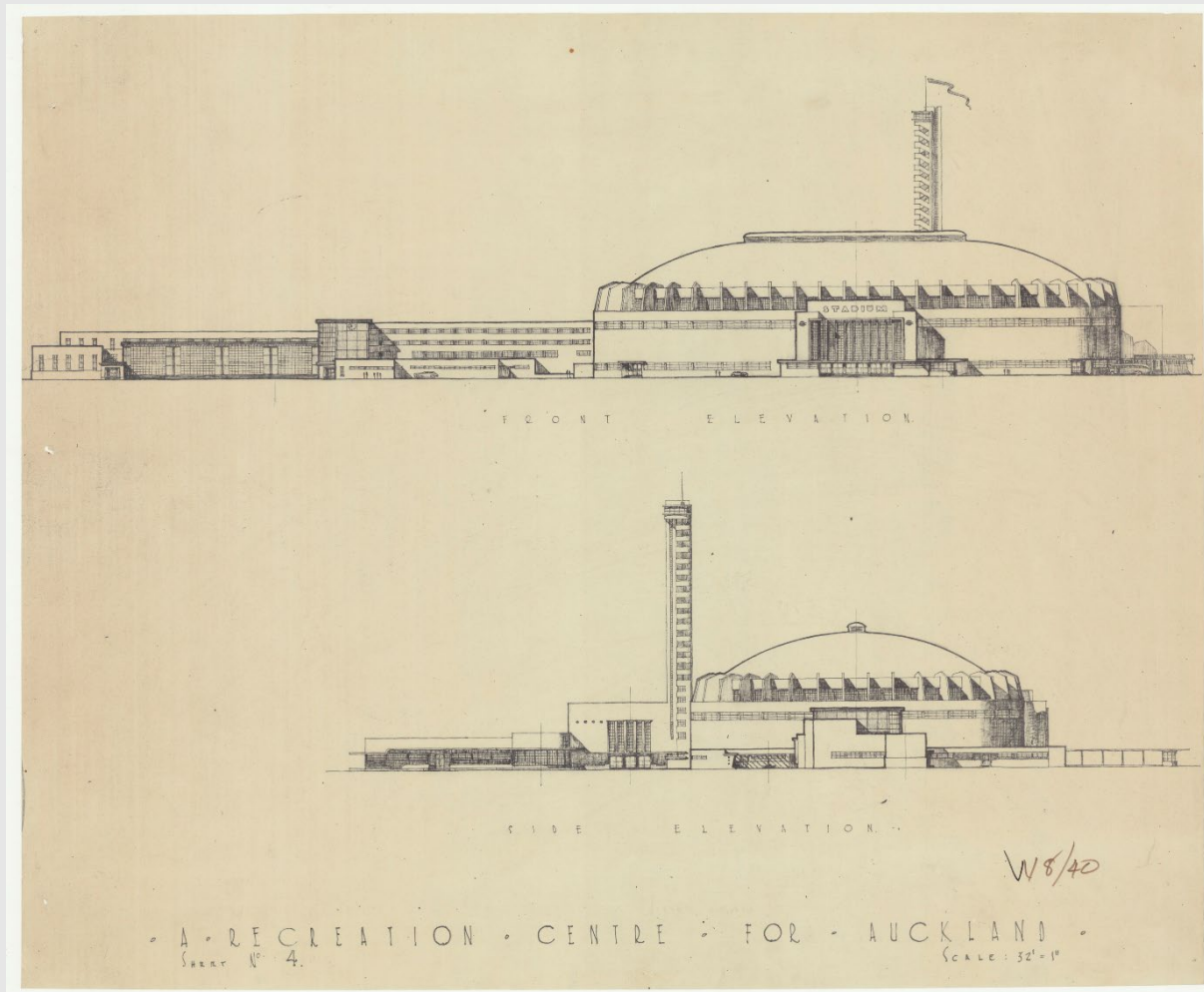
Bamboo sushi mat with assorted tools



Porcupine quills

# A Recreation Centre for Auckland

Owen Gordon, Senior Archivist



A Recreation Centre for Auckland, 1947, City Engineer's Plans, ACC 015 Record 9214-1-5 [Sheet 4], Auckland Council Archives

Earlier this year I was surprised to find this drawing in council's archives. Part of the City Engineer's plan series (ACC 015), it certainly looked to be of a grand and imposing public building. But what exactly was it, and was it ever constructed?

Perhaps the answer lay towards the left edge of the plan, with what looks like the outline of part of the Auckland War Memorial Museum in the Domain.

Unique in the history of war memorials, the Museum had opened in 1929 as a 'living memorial', intended to provide scientific educational services to the public, but after the Second World War stood unfinished, being only half the size as originally intended. Now, the city's thoughts turned towards the most appropriate way to commemorate the fallen, while also providing for the city's injured servicemen and their families.

Early suggestions (from the Auckland Junior Chamber of Commerce) included an Auckland – Whenuapai Memorial Drive, the addition of memorial pylons to the Harbour Bridge, a Civic Youth Centre, as well as the beautification of the city's beaches. But it was the completion of the War Memorial Museum that was in Mayor John Allum's sights. At a citizens' meeting held on 10 October 1946 at the Town Hall, he outlined his vision, with architect Malcolm Keith Draffin detailing the three key works proposed: the extension to the War Memorial, the addition of a lecture theatre, and the extension of the Museum building over the remainder of the site. The cost was estimated at £350,000.

Allum's proposal was highly divisive. Opposition came from several other borough mayors, notably the Mayor of Takapuna who believed the 'bricks and mortar' scheme ignored the needs of returned soldiers, as well as



the Returned Services Association (RSA), who strongly favoured an enlargement of the existing Veterans' Home in Mount Roskill. At a meeting organised by the RSA on 5 December 1946, the more outspoken attendees demanded the recently formed War Memorial Planning Committee be disbanded, despite that committee's announcement several days earlier that it would be prepared to receive proposals, with details of costings, method of control and maintenance, up to 31 March 1947.

Speaking after the 5 December meeting, K H Kelvin, President of the Second New Zealand Expeditionary Force, condemned both the personal attacks on the mayor as well as the derogatory statements made about the planning committee of citizens. Perhaps taking as his cue the atmosphere of dissent, he announced that his organisation's proposal would be announced at a later date.

On the morning of 21 March 1947, the ambitious scheme was unveiled. Drawing on the Junior Chamber of Commerce's earlier proposal for a Youth Centre and supported by the Auckland Council of Sport, it would be a huge four-storied building, housing gymnasiums, swimming pool, concert hall and sports arena. Provision was also made for bachelors' housing quarters and therapy rooms. A double-height hall of remembrance, opposite the entrance foyer, would bear the inscribed names of those killed in the war, and in a niche would be a lamp of remembrance. A colossal scheme, one early estimate suggested the buildings alone would cost over £1.1 million.

The proposal was chosen as one of four worthy of further consideration at a meeting of the Planning Committee on 6 May 1947, with City Engineer Arthur Dickson asked to supply a report on its merits. Among Dickson's chief concerns were that the sheer scale of the building was inappropriate for the open spaces of the Domain, that it would diminish the importance and aesthetic of the current Museum building, as well as the requirement of around eight acres of land for carparking. He was unable to recommend that the scheme progress.

On the 18 June 1947, the Planning Committee made the decision to recommend to the Auckland War Memorial General Committee that the proposal for extensions to the War Memorial Museum be adopted. Now all that remained was for the recreation centre plans to be forwarded to the City Engineer's Department for safekeeping, a memo from Town Clerk Ted Ashby noting *'These plans will be of no use for that purpose now, but may be useful in regard to the investigation into the proposal to erect a Stadium in the City'*.

Note: For more images of the Recreation Centre visit the Archives database, [Presto](#)

#### Sources:

A Recreation Centre for Auckland, 1947, City Engineer's Plans, ACC 015 Record 9214-1-5, Auckland Council Archives  
1939-45 War Memorial, 1945-1947, Town Clerk's Department Subject Files, ACC 275 Record 46-154, Auckland Council Archives

Domain – War Memorial Museum Addition, Works Department Classified Subject Files, ACC 219 Record 47-205, Auckland Council Archives



Find out more



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