

Council Archives

Auckland begins at the Archives



Welcome

The purpose of this newsletter is to update you on upcoming events and share information with you about new services, resources and additions to our collections.

In this issue, we tell you about an upcoming exhibition - Flushed Out, digitised district schemes and an interesting find at Archives South. We also delve into the history of Leys Institute and postal voting in Auckland local elections.

[Read more about the Archives](#)

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Flushed out - The secrets of the public toilet II

You may have read or heard about Alison Breese, Dunedin's 'Loo Lady'. Last year, Samantha Waru (Libraries Graduate) and Vicky Spalding (Senior Archivist Outreach) took on the mantle of Auckland's 'Loo Ladies'. Samantha researched the history of Auckland's public toilets from heritage facilities through to more modern designs, while Vicky curated the resulting essay into an exhibition. The exhibition is divided into several themes: toilets as art, eco toilets, underground facilities, accessibility and architectural design.

'Flushed Out – The Secrets of the Public Toilet' will go on display during Auckland Heritage Festival (26 September to 11 October 2020) at the Te Atatu North Community Centre, 595 Te Atatu Road, Te Atatu Peninsula.

Why public toilets? There is always interest in this quirky and slightly taboo topic. These modest and often overlooked structures can tell fascinating stories about Tāmaki Makaurau and the people who lived and worked here. Public toilet design also reveals changing social attitudes towards health and hygiene.

Since 1891 Auckland has been New Zealand's largest city. With the resulting growth in population, issues due to the lack of sanitation soon became apparent. Besides the need for proper drainage and sewerage, there was also a growing need for public toilets to help clean up the city streets. On 18 August 1863, the City Board of Commissioners decreed that work to build the first men's public toilet in Auckland should be started. This first toilet was a urinal and water closet located at the beginning of Queen Street Wharf on Custom House Street (now Customs Street).

Public conveniences were built in places used by many people and the 19th and 20th century saw huge increase and progress in the provision of public conveniences. Over time, conveniences have evolved from very basic facilities to architecturally designed structures designed to fulfil the varying needs of communities. While the designs may have changed, the expectations of public toilet users have not. People expect public toilets to be clean, accessible, convenient and to have a certain degree of privacy. Today, public toilet design is an opportunity for architectural flair, telling local stories, being environmentally friendly and to be more than just buildings with a toilet.

Image reference: Auckland City Council City Engineer's plan / ACC 015-1662-1



Historic district schemes and district plans



Before the Resource Management Act 1991, the Town and Country Plan Act 1953 and its amendments required councils to create and maintain district schemes to govern the development of the areas for which they were responsible. Because they are often consulted, Auckland Council Archives is undertaking a programme of digitising historic district schemes and plans, including planning maps

District schemes that have been digitised and are available to view online are:

- Auckland City District Scheme, operative 12 June 1961
- Auckland City District Scheme - First Review, operative 21 December 1970
- Auckland City District Scheme - Second Review, operative 1 August 1981
- Auckland City District Scheme - Third Review, operative 30 September 1991
- Auckland City District Plan Hauraki Gulf Islands Section, operative 22 July 1996
- Onehunga Borough District Scheme - Third Review, operative 28 June 1991
- City of Tamaki Otahuhu Ward - Third Review, operative 9 August 1989
- City of Birkenhead District Scheme - Second Review, operative 1 October 1986
- Borough of Devonport District Scheme - Second Review, operative 1 October 1986
- City of East Coast Bays District Scheme - Third Review, operative 23 December 1991
- North Shore City Transitional District Plan - Takapuna Planning District - Second Review, operative July 1994
- Borough of Northcote District Scheme - Third Review, operative 31 October 1989
- Franklin County District Scheme - Second Review, operative 12 August 1985
- Manukau City District Scheme - First Review, operative 1 May 1984
- Manukau City District Scheme Howick - Third Review, operative 15 July 1994
- City of Papakura District Scheme - Third Review, operative 11 May 1992
- Papatoetoe City District Scheme - Second Review, operative 31 March 1982
- Glen Eden Borough District Scheme - Second Review, operative 31 March 1982
- Henderson Borough District Scheme - Third Review, operative 1 September 1987
- New Lynn Borough District Scheme - Second Review, operative 3 June 1986
- Waitemata County Council District Scheme 1973, operative 15 February 1973
- Waitemata City Council District Scheme 1984, operative 20 December 1984

These district schemes can be accessed via our [Historic district schemes and plans of the Auckland region web page](#).

We will continue to digitise more district schemes and make them available on this page.

The Leys Institute - A short appreciation



Sitting high above the slopes of St Marys Bay, the Leys Institute library and gymnasium buildings are rare and important examples of Edwardian Baroque architecture in Auckland, monuments to the ideals of education and self-improvement, and the benevolence of the Leys family. The original founder, William Leys, was active in the community, holding positions with the Auckland Liberal Association, Ponsonby School Committee and influential in support of the Old Age Pensions Act, but it was his observations of local children living in overcrowded conditions and loitering around Three Lamps 'rapidly losing the good effects which the mental and moral discipline of school had impressed upon their characters' that prompted him to bequeath funds towards the building. He died travelling to England in 1899.

He had envisaged a place of learning and instruction as well as providing 'rational recreation', affiliated clubs and societies offering activities such as football, photography, debating and chess. One stipulated condition was that no religious lectures or discussions were to take place within the Institute. With additional funding from his brother Thomson, on a site provided by Auckland City Council, the Institute was opened by Edwin Mitchelson, Mayor of Auckland, earlier than anticipated in March 1905. The gymnasium was erected a year later, and over time a good number of renovations and additions have improved and extended the Institute's spaces, plans of which can be viewed on microfiche at Auckland Council Archives (in series AKC 339).

Management was by a committee comprising two trustees from the Leys family, members elected by the Institute's subscribers, and four nominated by the city council, an arrangement that lasted until 1964, when control of the Institute was transferred to Auckland City Council. The minutes of committee meetings between 1912 and 1964 are held in council's archives (series ACC 249) and are a rich source of information about the Institute's activities over the

years. Included are financial details, staff appointments, circulation statistics and reports on library programmes and events.



The Institute is especially well known for the importance it has placed on providing services for children, notably with the building of the Hilary Leys Memorial Wing in 1958. In the early 1960s efforts were made to reach children with poor reading skills, with the introduction of the 'Improvers Collection'. By 1963, this collection had reached around 1800 volumes and was hugely successful in attracting both European children who needed reading help, as well as a growing population of Polynesian immigrants for whom English was a second language. Innovation also arrived in the form of new technologies with the somewhat controversial installation of a Pye television set (1960) and a 'recorder-gram consol' (1959), used for taping stories to use in story hour. The wide range of activities available to children was observed by visiting library students in January 1960, as they watched children playing draughts and chess, making scrapbooks for hospital-bound children, listening to records, and recording onto tape the experiences of recent child immigrants from England. Children have also been closely involved in creating displays, organising panel discussions on topical issues, and helping look after the library and its collections as members of the 'Children's Library Club'.

The Institute was recently closed until further notice following a seismic assessment, but Leys continues to serve the local community, with a planned pop-up library at 14 Jervois Road (the Leys Institute Little Library), and by working innovatively with partners and facilities in the area to provide alternative spaces for library services.

Further information about the closure can be found on [Auckland Libraries website](#).

Sources:

Auckland City Council building permits and consents aperture cards, 1908-1997 (Auckland Council Archives, AKC 339)

Leys Institute Committee minutes, 1912-1964 (Auckland Council Archives, ACC 249)

The Leys Institute, St Mary's Road, Ponsonby, Auckland, NZ (1906)

Coral Ridling, *One Man's Dream: The Leys Institute and the Family Who Founded It* (2001)

Image references:

Leys Institute, St Marys Road, 1977. Auckland Libraries Heritage Collections 435-12-02

Story-Time Leys Institute, Ponsonby, 1959. Auckland Libraries Heritage Collections 919-11

A brief history of postal voting in Auckland local elections

The first postal voting for local authority elections in New Zealand was authorised as long ago as 1962 for two county council elections and gradually increased in popularity during the 1960s. By 1971, more than half of county council elections used postal voting, resulting in an impressive average voter turnout of about 75 per cent. It was considered that the dispersed residents of counties might find themselves nearer a post box than a polling booth. To be successful, postal voting requires accurate and up-to-date electoral rolls. Those for counties were thought to be more stable than their urban equivalents. Considering the merits of postal voting in 1971, Auckland City's Returning Officer noted that 7,500 properties in the city then changed occupants each year. Increasing voter participation and cost saving were thought to be the principal advantages of postal voting compared to traditional booth voting. Both systems require payment of permanent and temporary staff. Manukau City found that with postal voting it could complete its preliminary vote count using 173 staff rather than the 250 it had employed when its election was held at polling booths. Booth voting involves the additional expense of hiring and staffing polling venues.

Postal voting was adopted by East Coast Bays Borough in 1971, Manukau City in 1974, and Takapuna City in 1977. East Coast Bays reported a dramatic increase in voter turnout, reaching 71 per cent using postal voting compared to only 31 per cent in the 1968 ballot-box elections. Manukau City's voter turnout more than doubled after it adopted postal voting. When Auckland City belatedly followed suit in 1986, voter turnout at 60 per cent was also twice that of the previous election and the cost estimated to be over a third less than using ballot boxes, probably saving the city at least \$100,000.

However, not all were enamoured of postal voting. Some local politicians and journalists expressed concern that voters can be influenced by last-minute electioneering with postal voting and spread voting (where voters are permitted to cast their votes over several consecutive days prior to polling day). The principle of the secret ballot so easily protected by officials at polling booths cannot be successfully safeguarded for those voting at home, perhaps in the presence of domineering or unscrupulous companions. Returning officers noted that considerable time and expense were involved in concealing the serial numbers printed on returned voting papers to ensure they could not be linked to the electoral roll. Neglected or stolen posted voting papers provide opportunity for the electoral offence of plural voting that might prove hard to detect.

The mayor of Gisborne questioned the wisdom of allowing those unwilling to visit polling booths to determine the outcome of local elections. In the New Zealand Herald in 1971, he argued, 'The apathetic minority, voting only because voting papers are thrust upon them, would probably be non-selective in their choice of candidates and vote haphazardly. It is not



impossible that votes cast indiscriminately by electors who had no real interest in the outcome would upset the selection made by better-informed voters who had intelligently appraised the merits of the candidates'. There are obvious logistical problems with mailing thousands of voting papers to electors within statutory time limits. Letter-opening machines were in some cases used to process returned envelopes containing completed voting papers. Nevertheless, by 1986, postal voting had been adopted by fifteen of the twenty-two local authorities in Auckland, including the city councils for Auckland, Manukau, Takapuna, and Waitemata.

In 2010, the first election for the newly created Auckland Council saw turnout in a postal vote of 50.5 per cent, a marked improvement on the 38 per cent turnout at the previous triennial election for Auckland City Council. Turnout declined to 35.5 per cent in 2013, improving in 2016 to 38.5 per cent. A total of 375,649 people voted in last October's local elections in Auckland, a turnout of a little over 35 per cent. Almost two thirds of those eligible chose not to vote. Enrolled voters received their voting papers by post three weeks before the election closed together with a pre-paid envelope they were asked to post back to council or an electoral officer, or place by hand in ballot boxes at various locations, including council service centres and libraries and Britomart railway station. Recognizing the problem of declining participation in elections, council's 'Vote Auckland' campaign cost \$1.6 million. As well as a range of advertisements, it featured a separate elections website, 'one-stop shops' at community events where citizens could enrol and then cast their votes, workplace ballot boxes, and a schools' youth voting civics education programme.

An analysis of the 2016 Auckland Council elections based on responses from over 1,200 Aucklanders grouped reasons given by those who had not voted into three categories: effort, timing, and apathy. Respondents mentioned lack of knowledge of the candidates or their policies and difficulty deciding which to choose. Some found they had missed the deadline for voting or simply forgotten to vote. The final category was apathy about the political process or the feeling that individual votes would make no difference to the election outcome. The survey found discouraging difference between claimed and actual turnout, suggesting some respondents recognized their civic duty yet failed in its execution.

Although not identified in the 2016 survey, it is possible that voters are discouraged by the lengthy lists of candidates compared to those for a General Election, or by voting papers that combine the First Past the Post (FPP) system used to elect the mayor, councillors, and members of local boards and licensing trusts and proportional representation for district health board elections using single transferrable voting (STV). Some are disengaged from local government and issues, while others struggle to identify with candidates who may not be fully representative of the city's diverse population. The survey found some respondents retained a preference for postal voting, but a far larger number, particularly younger voters, believed turnout would be improved by the introduction of online voting.

Sources:

Auckland City Council Returning Officers' registered subject files, 1927-1993 (Auckland Council Archives, ACC 367)

'Freedom Fighter', *Our Auckland* (newsletter), August 2019, p 12 (Auckland Council Archives, AUC 044/28a)

Awareness of and Attitudes towards Voting in the 2016 Auckland Council Elections, June 2017 (Auckland Council Technical Report 2017/013)

Jacky Zvulun, 'Postal Voting and Voter Turnout in Local Elections: Lessons from New Zealand and Australia', *Lex Localis: Journal of Local Self-Government*, 8.2 (2010), pp 115-131

Image references:

Sorting some of the 31,000 postal votes received during the Manukau City elections, 1977
(Auckland City Council Returning Officers' registered subject file, 1971-1988, Auckland Council Archives, ACC 367/3e)

Auckland City's Returning Officer with voting papers after its first election using postal voting, 1986 (Accent: The Staff Magazine of the Auckland City Council, Christmas 1986, p 1, Auckland Council Archives, ACC 448/1)

Find out more

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