

Start recording your local history! (Peter Dentener; 7 July 2004)

That is the message Val Payne from the Mangere Historical Society wanted to get across recently at her well attended talk at the Mangere Bridge Library. "Put names on the back of photos, record dates and location". Remember those shoe boxes full of photos, stacked away in the garage or attic? Some of the content ends up in albums, hopefully with some information. But most boxes never get opened again, some even may get lost when people shift.

"Keep those old photos" says Val, "And if you don't want them, please give them to your local Historical Society who would love to have them". Photos are an important source of information, depicting an era. They show how people dressed, travelled and lived. We know how we lived when we grew up, so may our children. But do our grandchildren know?

"Grab a piece of paper, a video or still camera and start recording how you live, before the information gets lost", says Val. "Record your childhood memories, describe the house you grew up in, the kitchen and so on". Technological advances have been so great that teenagers these days would not be able to comprehend what living without a phone, television or computer would be like. Nor would they understand that only 50 years ago clothes were cleaned by boiling them in a copper tub over a fire, needed to be hand wrung, and left to dry on a rope stretched from one side of the garden to the other.

Want to know more about the history of your area? Visit your library, contact your local Historical Society, but most importantly, talk to people who have lived in your area for a long time. And to find out about your family, talk to grandparents, uncles and aunts. Don't forget that a lot of historical knowledge is not written down, and disappears when people die.

The Mangere Historical Society caters for all ages. Activities are organised frequently, and recent outings have included a visit for the opening of the new Pukaki Marae building, and a look at an old school building from Mangere Central which had been relocated to Sunnyvale, near Glen Eden, and is lovingly being restored. Another activity included a visit to Auckland International Airport where a plaque on a rock provides a memorial to aviators who died in the hay days of aviation.

The Mangere Historical Society's current project is to find out the history behind street names. "Church Street explains itself, and we know a fair amount about Coronation Road, Taylor Road and MacIntyre Road", says Val. But the Society would love to hear from people who know the history or meaning behind other street names.

Another project involves finding out more about a 'lost area'. Watea was near the Mangere Aerodrome. It had beaches with a few baches, and some people would even have a cow to get some butter. Val and other Society members are trying to trace people who lived in the area, or can remember it, to fill in the gaps.

Since the Society collects local historical information, the Society is often called upon to provide knowledge about their local area.

Val Payne ran the Mangere Flower Studio in Mangere Bridge for 20 years, from which she retired about 3 years ago. She has always been interested in people and history and being a florist made her aware of what was going on in the community. "People buy flowers as gifts, but also for birthdays, weddings and funerals so I knew what was going on". Being interested in history, she joined the Mangere Historical Society. "I thought I'd be sitting in the back, learning from others but within 9 months I was the Secretary, and heavily involved in the Society's work. Val, a live-member of the Onehunga-Mangere Soccer Club, has written its history. She has also written about Mangere Bridge's history and she and Janet Presland, the Society's president, are keen to publish it.

Val loves living in Mangere Bridge which she describes as "unique, a best kept secret. Mangere Bridge has a terrific village atmosphere". Retirement has not slowed down Val, and when I asked her how she relaxes, she answers: "I enjoy walking and join the Mangere Bridge Walking Group every Tuesday and Thursday morning. And I am also involved in the Methodist Church". No guessing what one of her activities with the Church is: recording their history!

Note: The Society is very keen for more information about the following streets: Abiru, Alderman, Alderson, Banbury, Bede, Betula, Bingara, Blake, Cameo, Carver, Chipping Dale, Claresholm, Dunstall, Freda, Fuiamanu, Harriette, Hocken, Kambalda, Koremako, Leeson, Macky, Mona, Morewood, Nadine, Nicola, Norana, Quennell, Regalwood, Windrush, Wood and Yorkton. Please contact Val Payne (ph 09 636 9261) or Janet Presland (ph 09 636 8386) if you can help.

We appreciate Val Payne's and Janet Presland's contribution to this article

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