

THE LOCAL



Karori

NGĀ KARERE HAPORI O KARORI

Chaytor Street, Karori, with retaining wall under construction. Wellington City Council Ref: 1/1-024668-G. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand.

YEAR OF WORK FOR OLD WALL

It's nearly 100 years since the Chaytor Street retaining wall was built – and it's finally getting an upgrade.

The Wellington City Council will begin work to seismically strengthen the wall in June, a project that is expected to run until September or October next year. The wall is a key route into Karori and au-

thorities have recognised for some time that work is needed to ensure it is stable and safe. Not only will the wall be strengthened but the existing mural will also be upgraded with a custom design public art project.

Traffic management measures will be in place while the project is underway.

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Year of work for old wall

Work to maintain a key access route to Karori is about to start, as **Stella Carruthers** reports.

Commuters travelling to and from Karori will put up with more than a year of disruption as the project to strengthen the Chaytor Street retaining wall gets underway.

The current Chaytor Street retaining wall holds up a steep slope beside a deep filled-in gully. The wall is a key piece of infrastructure supporting a busy road for local suburban communities that rely on this route for daily travel and emergency access. Chaytor Street is also a core public transport corridor used by several bus routes. According to the Wellington City Council, it carries around 18,330 vehicles a day (2019 data) with 5% of these being heavy vehicles.

The project will involve building a new wall at the face of the existing wall comprising of 325mm minimum thick reinforced concrete on pile foundations, laterally tied back with rock anchors. These new features will bring the infrastructure up to modern safety standards, according to the council.

The Karori Residents Association received a briefing from the council on the impact of the work. While the new wall is under construction Chaytor Street will remain open but traffic management will be in place and there will be some temporary changes to the road and surrounding area to make room for construction work.

KRA Chair Andrea Skews says the maintenance was needed so there would be less disruption in the future.

“The community will naturally be concerned about disruption during the works, but we must also recognise this as an important long term resilience project on a key transport route into Karori and the western suburbs.”


“...we must recognise this as an important long term resilience project on a key transport route into Karori and the western suburbs.”

The mural – a local landmark – would also be replaced.

The mural on the current retaining wall is 30 years old, painted during the 1990s by established mural artist, Doug Ford, in collaboration with the local community.

Mana whenua artist collective, Te Wai Whenua Design Co, has been commissioned to create a new artwork under the Council’s Tākai Here partnership agreement, with the mahi being led by Len Hetet (Te Āti Awa). The artwork will be a permanent feature, etched directly into the concrete surface of the new wall. According to the council, the design will reflect both the heritage and present-day identity of the area and will become a significant new piece of public art for Karori. “This approach reflects the Council’s commitment to working in partnership with Mana Whenua and to embedding Māori stories and cultural narratives in Wellington’s public spaces.”

The council said the overall vision of the rebuild project was to create a stronger, safer and more welcoming entrance to Karori.

“The work will ensure the long term stability of the road and enhance safety for all users.” 



Road changes to accommodate construction:

- The bus lane will be shifted into a car lane to make room for construction
- Car parks in Chaytor street will be removed to allow for two-way traffic with adjusted lanes.
- Bus stop 5321 at the corner of Chaytor Street and Birdwood Street will be temporarily closed.
- Pedestrians will be redirected to the shared cycle pathway within Appleton Park.
- No lanes will be lost during peak traffic hours, and access for emergency vehicles will remain unchanged.
- Birdwood Street will be available as an alternative route.



Lin Walden, Texas Downes, Warrick Lyon, Sue Guest, Joanne Davidson are members of FOWKS.

Karori's hidden streams

eneath the streets and gardens of Karori runs a partially hidden network of streams. A passionate group of locals is working quietly to enhance water quality, so native species can thrive. **Maggie Tait** reports.

Friends of Waipāhihi Karori Stream (FOWKS) was formed under the umbrella of the Karori Residents Association and operates under a memorandum of understanding with Wellington City Council, enabling the group to undertake activities for the ongoing care of Karori Stream.

Catch them on a working day and you might spot them by the stream holding test tubes up to the light, collecting bugs to assess water health, or removing rubbish from the waterway and banks. Signs dotted along the waterway warn of risks to human health. “Our stream is not in peak health, and that’s why we’re doing this,” says Jo Davidson, one of the group organisers. In addition to testing water quality, the group has recently started some restoration work clearing weeds along the tributary in Karori Park and is working with local EnviroSchools on restoring the public space by the walkway between Karori Pools and the RSA.

Karori Stream originates in the hills around Karori and flows all the way to Cook Strait. The catchment covers more than 3,000 hectares of steep, hilly terrain, with over half in native or exotic vegetation and around 20% protected by covenants.

The stream has been significantly modified and contaminated by urban land use in the upper


catchment headwaters. The stream is used as the stormwater channel for most of the Karori suburb, carrying with it everything that washes off roads, driveways and gardens or that is washed down stormwater drains. Ageing and leaking wastewater infrastructure also impacts the stream.

Yet despite this, lower parts of the catchment, down South Karori Road, support a remarkable range of life. “Through recent eDNA testing we were excited to discover that endangered shortjaw kōkopu are living in the stream,” says Anya Pollock, one of the group members. Other native fish known to be present include shortfin and longfin eel, kōaro, banded kōkopu, inanga, several species of bully and kōura. “One of our goals is to protect and restore the urban areas of the stream so that all locals can appreciate having these amazing taonga in their backyard.”

Friends of Waipāhihi works across three broad goals: understanding and educating the community about the stream’s current condition and how it can be improved; actively working to improve water quality and biodiversity; and caretaking the stream for future generations.

“We’re doing this for the people who come after us,” says Jo Davidson. “If we don’t look after these waterways now, that window closes.”

It is unglamorous work, often done in cold water and wet boots. But for those who show up, the reward is knowing that Karori’s waterways are a little healthier than they would otherwise be.

If you would like to get involved with Friends of Waipāhihi, join their Facebook group here: [facebook.com/groups/fowks](https://www.facebook.com/groups/fowks) 

Thanks Karori!

I would like to offer my heartfelt thanks to the Karori community for the warm welcome our new community newspaper has received. It's been heart-warming to see the kind social media posts, receive the emails of congratulations, and to get all the great suggestions for future stories.



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Find out more at the-local.co.nz

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Get in touch

Got a news tip?
Want to write for us, or help deliver?
Email us at: editor@the-local.co.nz
Follow us: facebook.com/TheLocalWellington

Deliveries and Distribution

The Local is distributed to Karori letterboxes and local cafes on the first weekend of every month (except January).


If you missed out on your copy, want extras or would prefer not to have a paper copy delivered, contact us at: editor@the-local.co.nz

Subscribe to the electronic edition via our website: the-local.co.nz

Design: homestudio.nz

In particular it has been pleasing (and something of a relief!) to have advertisers come forward to want to advertise in the newspaper. Starting a new venture like this is always something of a leap of faith, and it's great to see that advertisers recognise the benefit of getting their message into a newspaper with genuine local news that is delivered to every home in the suburb.

I have recently returned from a national conference for community newspapers. Although we often hear bad news about media outlets being shut down, in truth there is an extensive array of independent local news operators alive and well in many pockets of Aotearoa. They tend to fly under the radar but many are doing excellent work in their communities, succeeding with the benefit of local

knowledge and understanding. We aim to do the same here in Karori! 



Jane O'Loughlin
Editor



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Community constable: Preventing car thefts




This month's police message is a reminder about how we can help prevent car thefts.

Get into the habit of keeping your vehicle locked at all times with the windows fully closed, even in your own driveway. Try to park your vehicle off the road, or in a secure place such as a garage where possible.


Look into installing a car alarm and immobilizer if your car doesn't have any. For a relatively inexpensive option, consider using a steering wheel lock. These are easy to use and are visible from the outside.




By making your vehicle more challenging to steal, opportunistic thieves will be more likely to leave your car alone.

As always – be aware of what's going on around your local area and help out your neighbours!

If you notice suspicious or concerning activity around vehicles, call Police using **111** or **105** if it has happened after the fact. You can also provide information anonymously via Crime Stoppers online, or **0800 555 111**. 


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St Teresa's School Karori

 **Marsden & Chelsea Clubs**



Day Programme for those with dementia, cognitive or other conditions

The Marsden Club in Newcombe Crescent, Karori, (and the Chelsea Club in Lyall Bay) provide high quality, professional day programmes for people with dementia and other cognitive conditions. Funding from Health NZ is usually available.

For more information contact: Angela 027 349 9691 or visit: marsdenclub.org.nz

Staying well in winter



By **Kat Hartley**, Registered Nurse & Community Nurse Prescriber.

Winter brings hot drinks, warm soups and, unfortunately, respiratory infections. Illnesses like influenza (flu), Covid, colds and other viruses spread more easily when people spend more time indoors and in close contact. Here's what you can do to prevent respiratory infections, keep well and look after yourself if you get sick.

Prevention

- Vaccination is one of the most effective ways to protect yourself and those around you from respiratory infections. They work by helping your immune system to recognise and fight viruses.
- Vaccines are generally considered very safe. Enormous amounts of research and resources go into ensuring their safety and efficacy.
- Vaccinations don't guarantee complete protection, but they significantly reduce your risk of severe illness, hospitalisation and long term complications of respiratory illnesses.
- Karori Medical Centre can administer flu vaccines for anyone over the age of 6 months, and Covid vaccines for anyone over the age of 5 years. Vaccines protect against the latest strains of flu and Covid.

Healthy Habits

- Regular handwashing removes viruses before they can enter your body. Avoid touching your face, especially your eyes, nose and mouth, as these are common entry points for viruses to get into your body.
- Open a window – good indoor ventilation helps to reduce air-borne viruses and reduce dampness.
- A balanced healthy diet, regular physical activity, adequate sleep and stress management also help to support your immune system.



I'm sick – what now?


Most respiratory infections can be managed at home and do not require antibiotics. In fact, recent research shows that antibiotics are ineffective against viral infections, and taking them unnecessarily increases your risk of antibiotic resistance.

- Stay at home, rest, keep your fluids up, rest and manage your symptoms with over-the-counter medications. Did I mention rest? Rest is one of the most important things you can do when you're unwell as it helps your body to recover more quickly.
- Symptoms of respiratory infections usually peak around 2-4 days before starting to improve. Sometimes symptoms can linger for up to 2 weeks, but if your symptoms are gradually improving then that's OK.

When should I worry?

Contact your healthcare provider if you have severe symptoms, worsening symptoms, or your symptoms are not improving.

- Symptoms to worry about include: Fever over 39 degrees that's not coming down with anti-fever medication, difficulty breathing, chest pain, persistent vomiting and dehydration.
- For babies and children: poor feeding or reduced fluid intake, lethargy, fewer wet nappies and for babies under 3 months, any fever of 39 and over.
- **Emergency:** severe difficulty breathing, difficulty waking the person or bluish lips or face.

Keep well this winter – snuggle up, keep warm and remember that the KMC team is here to help. 


Looking after ngā manu

In the last decade native birds have been spreading out from the Zealandia sanctuary to visit backyards around Wellington city.



Photo: Emir de Souza

Zealandia's Lead Ranger Conservation, Ellen Irwin, has some tips for keeping the birds safe:

- **Don't feed the birds.** Nuts can make kākā sick, cause deformities and even lead to death. Feeders can also make birds vulnerable where they act as a beacon for local predators. Additionally, by hunting out their own food, the sometimes destructive kākā expend their extra energy.
- **Plant native trees and shrubs.** These provide the food that native birds are designed to eat
- **Get rid of invasive weeds.** These often outcompete and smother native plants.
- **Track and trap predators** like rats and weasels.
- **Record bird sightings** on the app iNaturalist, to support the team at Zealandia to understand manu populations and the overall wellbeing of a species as they spread from the sanctuary out into the surrounding suburbs. 



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Lead the way Karori

One thing we've learnt through community work is that many people want to help improve Karori – they just don't always know where to start.

Volunteer groups everywhere are stretched thin. Many locals have skills, ideas, and passion, but not necessarily the time to commit to a committee role or take on the complexity of launching a project alone. That's where *Lead the Way Karori* comes in.

The initiative is about helping locals turn ideas into action by giving them the connections, support, mentoring, and framework to get projects off the ground. Often it's not the "what" that stops people – it's the "how".

One of the best examples started with a simple community meeting after our local stream was rated an "E" on the LAWA (Land Air Water Aotearoa) website, placing it among the worst 25% of monitored sites nationally. At the time, it was simply an idea and a conversation. What emerged surprised us.

Right here in Karori, we discovered residents with significant knowledge and expertise in freshwater science and environmental restoration. Those conversations led to the formation of the Friends of Waipāhihi Karori Stream group, which now works alongside Wellington City Council under a formal Memorandum of Understanding.

Today the group is carrying out water testing, restoration work, advocacy, and education around the health of the stream. The recent discovery of rare native species such as kōkopu highlights why this work matters and the ecological value still present within our suburb (you can read more about this on page 3).



Top: The rare shortjaw kōkopu was discovered in Karori stream.
Bottom: The water quality at Karori stream is tested regularly

For the Karori Residents Association, it reinforced something important: communities already contain enormous talent and leadership. Sometimes people simply need a pathway and encouragement to step forward.

The same thinking now applies to other projects. Ultimately, the goal is simple: a stronger, more connected, and more resilient Karori.

Whether it's environmental restoration, climate preparedness, transport, infrastructure, or community wellbeing, we believe collaboration is one of the suburb's greatest strengths. By connecting local knowledge and supporting people willing to lead, we can help build a community that is informed, adaptable, and ready for the future. **TL**

Get involved with Lead the Way Karori

Do you have an idea, a skill, or a passion for your community? We'd love to hear from you – whether you're ready to lead a project or just want to explore what's possible.

@ chair@karoriassociation.nz

📍 karoriassociation.nz

📘 facebook.com/karorires



Meet the Board of KBA

This month we introduce you to two more members of the Board.



Sue Dobbie has worked in community-based economic development in deprived rural communities in Northland. She is currently a director of Karori Baptist Ltd, owners of the commercial property at 157-159 Karori Road. Sue wants to strengthen connections to create a safer, caring and more prosperous community where everyone has a sense of belonging. In Karori this is already happening with growing links between businesses, residents, young people, schools and community groups. She is particularly committed to strengthening the links between business and youth.



If you're a keen op-shopper, you may already have met **Gill Burns**, manager of the Mary Potter Hospice Shop on Karori Road. As an architect who graduated from Victoria University, Gill is passionate about affordable housing, and much of her working life has been spent with community housing NGOs. That experience has provided a strong foundation for her role at Mary Potter, where she connects daily with volunteers and shoppers alike. By drawing on her first-hand experience of working locally, Gill wants to serve the business community and suggest ways to support and strengthen a thriving Karori. Its been her home since 1990, and where she raised her family.

KBA website

We're updating the Karori Business Association's web directory with a fresh design and new content. We know some listings are out of date and are contacting local businesses for your most current information. If your business details need correcting, don't wait – get in touch. We want to make sure customers can find

you easily when the updated directory launches and this is your chance to ensure you're visible and accurately represented. Email members@karori.org.nz

The Local – Karori advertising discount

The Local – Karori and KBA are pleased to offer KBA members a discount on advertising. Place a display ad (1/4, 1/3, 1/2 or full page) from July onward, and receive a 15 per cent discount off the rate card cost. This offer is available for up to 6 placements per business. To take advantage of this deal, email the helpful team sales@the-local.co.nz with "KBA discount" in the subject line. Conditions apply.

KBA Associate membership

Karori businesses outside the BID zone are welcome to join KBA. Enjoy great member benefits like the ad deal above, invitation to member events and meetings and a standard listing in the KBA website. Be a voice that is heard in our advocacy for Karori businesses. Special low introductory fee: annual \$300+GST or monthly \$30+GST. Email members@karori.org.nz for more information and the terms that apply.

KBA Calendar

KBA Board meeting 6–8pm, Monday 22 June at Karori Community Centre, 7 Beauchamp St. Open to KBA members. RSVP by 18 June to members@karori.org.nz.

KBA contacts

- BID Manager: manager@karori.org.nz
- Marketing/communications: connect@karori.org.nz
- Membership enquiries: members@karori.org.nz
- Website: karori.org.nz

The Karori Business Association (KBA) is dedicated to supporting and promoting businesses in Karori and the surrounding suburbs, helping to strengthen the area as a vibrant place to shop, work, conduct business and connect as a community. We administer the Karori Business Improvement District (BID), a partnership between the Council and the local business community, focused on enhancing economic resilience and fostering growth. KBA is funded through a targeted rate on commercial properties within the BID area, along with membership fees.

Let us know any business news or events you would like KBA to highlight in our monthly column. Contact KBA comms: connect@karori.org.nz

Housing our ageing population

Andrea Skews from **Lowe & Co** wants to see more variety in our housing types.

I hear it regularly at open homes and appraisals: “We’re looking for something on the flat.” Many over-65s are ready to downsize, but they don’t want to leave the communities they helped build.

These are people who raised families in our local suburbs. They volunteered at schools, supported local businesses and built long-standing community connections. Now the children have moved out, the house feels too large, and maintenance is getting harder. The natural next step should be simple: a smaller, warm, low-maintenance home close to shops, transport and familiar faces.

But the housing requirements of the community appears to have been overlooked in our urban planning.

Over the past decade, I’ve raised this regularly with developers, councillors and MPs. Many newer townhouse developments close to village centres are helping increase housing supply, but a large number are still heavily stair based, which does not always align with the needs of long term downsizers.

Yet the demand is clearly there. That shift is already underway in Karori, where I see it every week. Statistics NZ projects that by 2028, one in five New Zealanders will be over 65. That is not a niche market.

They still want space for grandchildren, somewhere for a pet, good sun, storage and parking – room to live comfortably, not feel like they’ve moved into a shoebox.

At the same time, freeing up larger family homes creates movement in the wider housing market. The larger homes that no longer suit retired couples become opportunities for younger families wanting to establish themselves in the same communities.

Rising living costs, childcare pressures and the challenge of housing affordability are leading more families to combine resources and support networks under one roof. In many cases, grandparents are helping with childcare and stability, while adult children assist with day to day support as parents age. It is a model many cultures have embraced for generations, and increasingly it is becoming a practical solution


for Wellington families trying to stay connected, financially resilient and close to the communities they know.

In Karori specifically, I am currently working with a number of buyers who are ready to make that move – people with equity, motivation and a clear sense of what they want. What they are waiting for is the right family home to come to market. If you have been thinking about whether now is the right time to sell, that conversation is worth having sooner than you might think.

This is where smarter planning matters. We need a wider mix of housing options around our suburban centres. Not every development requires elevators, but incorporating accessible design into a portion of new housing stock would better reflect where our population is heading.

The new Campbell Village development has a design that will cater to some of these requirements, so I remain hopeful that developers are starting to build for the people.

Good downsizer housing is about independence, dignity and community connection. These residents have spent decades shaping the character of our suburbs. That knowledge and history matters, and our planning should reflect it.

Wellington talks a lot about intensification. Perhaps it is also time we talked more seriously about accessibility and who we are actually building for. 

If you want a clear view of where your property sits in this market, I’m always available for a straight conversation.

Call Andrea Skews on **0220 SELL IT** or email andrea@loweandco.nz

Andrea Skews is a licensed real estate salesperson with Lowe & Co Realty and a member of the Real Estate Authority Board. The views expressed here are her own and are not made in her capacity as an REA Board member.

Sources: settled.govt.nz | rea.govt.nz | stats.govt.nz



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Jim and the junior journalists

Print journalism is alive and well at Karori West Normal Primary School, **Lee-Anne Duncan** discovers, where the editor of the Journalism Club is New Zealand's top journalism teacher emeritus, **Jim Tully**.



Jim Tully and the West Karori Primary School Journalism Club.
Photo: Lee-Anne Duncan

It's week two of term 2 and the editorial meeting for *Te Awa Times* is in full swing. About half the sixteen pupils giving up their lunchtime are Year 8s, mostly returning old hands, while the others are Year 7 rookie reporters.

"Who wants the story about Karori's new policeman?" asks Jim Tully, a school granddad and New Zealand's longest-serving, most esteemed journalism teacher. Several hands shoot up. "Okay. What about the takahē chick at Zealandia?" More hands up.

Other proposed stories are school-focused. A day in the life of a staff member. A zoo trip. Some take a school angle on a national story – say, bike safety lessons linking to rule changes allowing young cyclists on footpaths.

"Now draft questions and send them to me. Then start setting up interviews," says Jim, as Liz – his wife and a former journalist – notes who's pursuing what.

Jim officially retired from teaching in 2020 after a few years at Massey University's journalism school, preceded by 25 years at Canterbury University. He's taught hundreds of the country's journos, including myself and this paper's publisher, Jane O'Loughlin. Now he's back doing what he loves, albeit with a younger cohort – as well as the Year 7/8s at Karori West, Jim and Liz have worked with Samuel Marsden's Year 5/6 girls to produce a paper.

"I think I put this to the principal here as being about extending their writing skills, but in the context of a newswriting it must be concise and totally factual.

"There are quite a few disciplines around writing news, and this gives the children a vehicle to develop that skill, which will be handy for writing beyond newspapers. And this is writing with a purpose."

It's also good fun. "The interviewing and the writing, I enjoy it," says a boy.

"It gives me an excuse to draw all lunchtime," says a keen cartoonist.

"I like seeing my writing and photos in the paper, and, yes, my name," adds another. "It's great to see the end result."

The end result is the 12-page *Te Awa Times*. Jim and Liz compile it, taking a light approach to editing. "They're very capable, and we don't want to be hovering and interfering. The trick is ensuring we put out a publication the school is proud of without undermining the integrity of the kids' writing," says Jim.

Then about 400 copies are printed off and distributed to the school community.

Jim has had some "born writers" through and hopes he's igniting future journalists. At the very least he's championing the enduring value of print. "The main thing is they see that a newspaper is relevant and interesting, less archaic than it might have been for many of them." *The Local* agrees entirely. **TL**



The Karori local cafe that gives back to conservation


Every bite supports Zealandia's conservation work
Located on Level 2 of the Zealandia Visitor Centre
End of Waiapu Road, Karori

Rātā

CAFE

ULO ? Unidentified Local Object

Identify the mystery object – something in Karori – to win a \$20 book voucher.

Email your answers to us at karori@the-local.co.nz. If there's more than one correct answer, the winner will be selected at random. Congratulations to Phoebe Thompson who correctly identified May's ULO as the mural in the Karori Pool carpark. 





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Join about twenty other caregivers with their babies and pre-school children in a welcoming, safe and fun environment. Every Wednesday between 9:30-11:30am during school terms. Morning tea provided for adults; children bring their own. On-site parking available at 163 Karori Road, Marsden Village, Karori. \$3.00 per family. Any questions? Contact Annette on 022 107 2751.

Karori Foodbank

The Karori Foodbank is located in the Karori Community Centre (KCC) and distributes parcels twice a week. With the demand for our food parcels on the rise this year, we always welcome donations (non-perishable items in the big blue wheelie bin at the KCC). Potential clients needing a food parcel need to ring the phone line on 04 476 3455 and leave a message or fill out the form at the KCC. Someone will get back to you to discuss your specific needs.

Good Companions Karori

Do you want to meet a group of friendly people? Come to Good Companions. Every 4th Tuesday of the month, February to November. 11am-1 pm, St Teresa's Hall, 299 Karori Road. \$7 per person (includes entertainment and a light lunch). Phone: 04 476 6131. Otari Parish Office: office@otariparish.co.nz

Arts & Crafts Open Day 2026

Karori Arts & Crafts Centre opens its doors on Sunday 21 June from 1pm to 4pm. Join us for an afternoon of free art & craft activities for all ages, and discover what your neighbourhood arts & crafts centre has to offer. Free entry, all are welcome!

Karori community patrol

Volunteer in your spare time for the Karori community patrol. Full training provided! Work with local police to help keep our community safe. More info: karori@cpnz.org.nz

Community Lunch

The Karori Community Centre, with fantastic support from Kaibosh Food Rescue and a dedicated group of volunteers, hosts a Community Lunch every second Thursday of the month at 11:50am at the Centre. This lunch is open to everyone and is a wonderful opportunity to meet people from the Karori community. Upcoming lunch dates: 7 June and 21 June. Koha is appreciated on the day. For regular updates, visit: Facebook.com/KaroriCommunityCentre

SMASH Afterschool and Holiday Programmes

Vibrant, child-focused spaces where daily activities are tailored to the children attending. SMASH also offers Christian programmes as part of our community-focused outreach. Visit thesmashclub.org.nz or email office@thesmashclub.org.nz for more.

Karori Floral Design Club

Do you love flowers, creativity, and good company? Our club has inspired flower arranging in Karori for 30 years, offering the chance to learn new skills in a relaxed and friendly environment. We meet every second Wednesday of the month at 7:30pm at St Ninian's Church, Karori Rd. Come and see us on 13 June at our stall at the St Ninian's Church Garage Sale, on the corner Karori Rd and Newcombe Tce. For further information contact Cheryl on 021 268 9377.



Why Karori? Why not!

Leah McFall defends Karori against its critics.

Has this ever happened to you? You're at a thing and someone asks you where you live and when you tell them, they roll their eyes and sigh, "Karori"?

You know what they mean. They mean you've picked the most distant, boring, misty place in Wellington, far from the life and zest of the city. They mean you've traded in sex and spontaneity for two petrol stations and a bridge club. You're finished, compared to them, because they live in Newtown and ride a cargo bike, and you drive a Kia Sportage.

Well, I've had enough of this nonsense. Karori needs defending, as a suburb bursting with life, like a Dickens novel.

We Karorians might've left 30 or 40 far behind, but we've still got it. I can't move in the Four Square for good-looking shoppers, and what about all the hot seniors off to yoga, carrying rolled-up mats? Our colder mornings and stubborn fog are doing wonders for our skin.

Oh, but Karori's so conservative, someone with a Unity Books loyalty card will say!

We're so far away, we're told. And it's true, we can't see the harbour or coast. Just now, thank goodness for that. When I flush something, I hope never to see it again.

I guess it's a pity we don't live under the flight path, as our critics do. But we're so much closer to nature. Kākā swoop so low, we often need to duck. Speaking of ducks, they're totally in charge of Darwin Street. We've kiwi in the hills, bullies in the stream and poodle-mixes as far as the eye can see.

Yes, there are more private flagpoles than necessary, but it's good to know the difference between, say, Samoa and China. It helps in a pub quiz. Personally, I don't mind the idea of being closely watched whenever I pass an ambassadorial residence. It's an incentive to brush my hair.

Oh, but Karori's so conservative, someone with a Unity Books loyalty card will say! The picket fences, the National Party billboards in election year! Yes, there are former and current conservative politicians in Karori. There are also lefties, centrists, people who swear at each other in local meetings, and many, me among them, who couldn't pick Chris Penk out of a line-up.

Our most famous local was an avant-garde, romantically reckless, non-conformist genius! Sure, Katherine Mansfield couldn't wait to get out of here, but Karori fertilised some of the most glittering short stories of the last century. If she were alive today, I bet she'd be queuing for a Brumby's pie like everybody else.

All the things they judge us for – the enclosure of the hills and our single road in, our unassuming routines and pride in our homes and gardens, our modest pleasures (a bun, a book), our knowing each other's faces, kids and dogs, and caring about each other's news – the good and bad – are the best things about us.

Keep yacking on corners, smiling at each other in the park and letting someone else go first, Karori.

They say it takes a village, and this is ours. **TL**



Wrights Hill Fortress

Mike Lee from the Wrights Hill Fortress Restoration Society explains how a gun emplacement in Karori was going to defend Wellington in the 1940s.

Wrights Hill Fortress in Karori was a long-range coastal battery built to protect Wellington City and environs from possible enemy attack from the Pacific in World War Two.

In March 1942 authority was given for work to proceed on construction of the battery of three 9.2 inch guns. The British-designed fortress was adapted to New Zealand conditions and by October 1942, construction was being pushed ahead with top priority. Towards the end of 1943 when the situation in the Pacific had improved, the priority lapsed and its completion was carried out in a more leisurely way.

Extensive underground work started in November 1942 and Downers, an engineering firm, constructed the massive task of 620 metres of interconnecting tunnels in just two years. When Downers became short of men in December 1943, the Public Works department helped out with men and machines.

Two guns were installed by the army in 1944. Parts of them arrived by ship from the United Kingdom and were hauled up to the top of the steep Wrights Hill Road behind a D8 tractor. The order for the third gun was cancelled after an improvement in the Pacific War situation.

The 9.2 inch guns could fire a 380 pound shell up to 18 miles to the entrance of Wellington harbour into Cook Strait, or across towards Tory channel in the Marlborough Sounds. There were test firings into Cook Strait in 1946 and 1947. The first “proofing”

as it was known, was accurate, but the huge blasts broke many of the windows at the Fortress.

The Fortress was used for training in the 1950’s but a Government decision saw the two guns cut up for scrap metal and sold, ironically, to the Japanese in early 1960.

After years of neglect, the Karori Lions rescued the Fortress in 1989 and they were opened up to the public for the first time on ANZAC Day. Thousands of people had their first glimpse of the WW2 complex. From 1992 a group of enthusiasts began work to administer the project into the future. Their work continues to this day.

The Wrights Hill Fortress Restoration Society is working to preserve and restore the Fortress as “a historical monument for the benefit of the community.” Open days are held on major public holidays and money raised from these, private tour groups and membership goes back towards restoration costs. **TL**

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Wrights Hill Fortress will be open to the public on King’s Birthday, Monday 1 June. For more information see wrightshillfortress.org.nz


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