

NZTA sells off local green space

The New Zealand Transport Agency is selling off the few small parcels of vacant green space remaining alongside the busy roading network they created at the intersections of Karo Drive, Willis, Abel Smith and Victoria Streets.

Originally claimed under the Public Works Act, these small areas of 'road reserve' are the last remaining buffers of open space between the roadway and people's homes.

Included is the vacant grass-covered corner between 128 Abel Smith Street and the public walkway to Oak Park Ave (pictured right), that currently provides an important cushioning effect upon the adjacent motorway on-ramp, and a clear sight-line for pedestrians crossing the busy road.



Left and above: Local road reserve on sale for private development (Editor's note: Wellington's mainstream media have only reported this story in their 'Real Estate' sections)

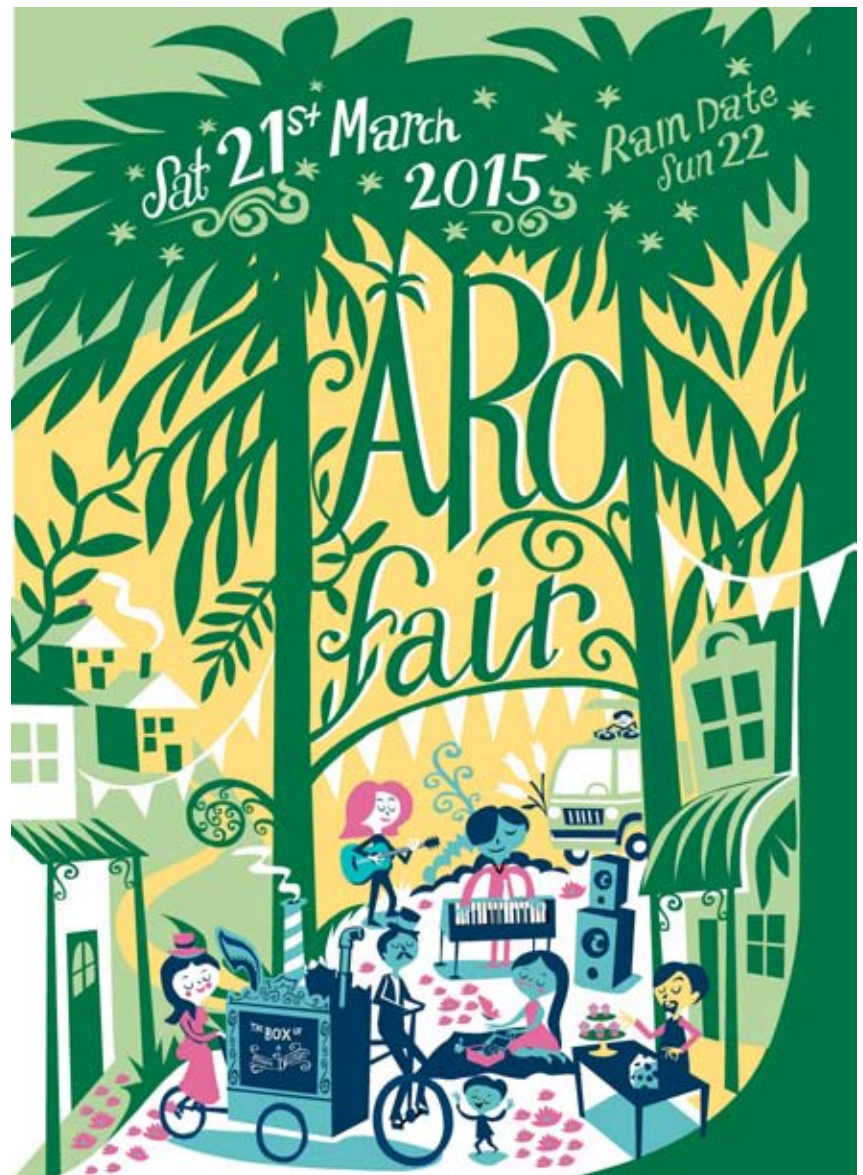


Other areas for sale include the small planted triangle of land on the corner of Karo and Abel Smith St and the garden at 238 Victoria St behind the former 'Divine Energy' house.

The houses at 325 and 327 Willis Street, recently occupied by the evicted 'Divine Energy' and 'Still Waters' community centre respectively, are also now up for sale or sold.

An earlier NZTA sale of vacant land on the southern corner of Abel Smith and Victoria Streets has resulted in the construction of an eight-storey apartment block (pictured above), providing some indication of what may be in store for the other parcels of publicly owned land now on the market.

(More on NZTA roads page 5)



Debate over Valley cats

Max Rashbrooke



Aro cats – the morgan, the better?

The handling of local cats continues to spur debate, with one resident making exceptional efforts to re-home stray cats but campaigners arguing the Valley needs to go further in clamping down on predators.

Local resident Angela Nash has spent much of the last couple of years working to re-house the stray cats in the colony under 290 Willis Street, the large NZTA-neglected house on the corner with Abel Smith Street.

Along with former AVCC coordinator Linda Beatson, Nash had nineteen cats – including two litters of kittens – caught and neutered. All bar two of the adult cats have since been re-homed. The remaining two are still at 290 Willis Street, and Nash continues to feed them once a day, as she has done for over 18 months.

Nash says she was prompted to act by a desire to avoid animal cruelty. “I don’t

like any kind of suffering. I don’t like to see animals starving, or being cold.” So she “became like a guardian for the cats ... I just started feeding them and socialising them.”

However, some campaigners feel more has to be done. Geoff Simmonds works on Gareth Morgan’s high-profile *Enhancing the Halo* and *Cats to Go* campaigns, the latter of which calls for a drastic reduction in the number of domestic cats.

Simmonds says neutering cats (as part of a re-housing project) “of course prevents them from breeding, but ... you need to neuter 90% of the population to stop it growing because they breed so fast. Neutering in itself is not a strategy, and it certainly doesn’t stop them catching birds.”

Morgan’s campaign cites research showing the average cat brings home 13 pieces of prey – native birds and skinks as well as rats and mice – each year but in fact kills five times as much, the rest of the kills being disposed of without the cat owner’s ever seeing them. “Cats are incredibly effective hunters and are wiping out our native birds,” the campaign says.

The campaign urges people to keep their cats indoors at all times – “the ideal situation is that every cat is a home cat,” says Simmonds – and to not replace their cat when it dies.

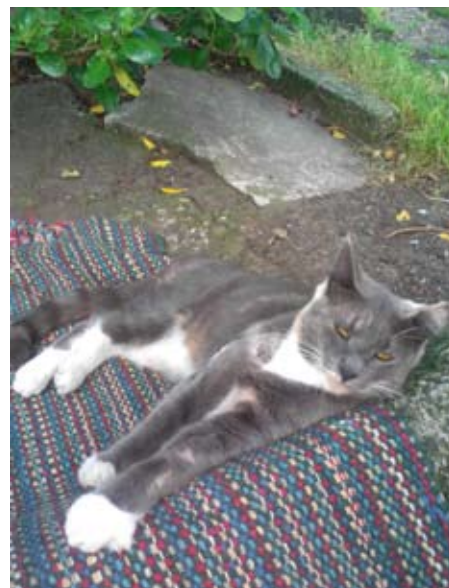
Nash agrees that people should take responsibility for their animals: “He [Morgan] was talking about responsibility, and I don’t think that’s a bad thing.” But she didn’t want to comment further on issues around native wildlife.

Meanwhile, Simmonds says the

Enhancing the Halo project – which aims to help wildlife spread out from Zealandia – has been “a real success”. Around 1500 households have signed up and 500 are actively trapping pests, many of them in the Aro Valley.

The project is now working with communities elsewhere in Wellington, in Crofton Downs and Greenside, “to demonstrate that a predator-free community is possible. A place like the Aro Valley could be functionally predator-free ... It’s really do-able to get rats and stoats down to a level that most of our native birds coming out of Zealandia can cope with.”

The key, Simmons said, was to have one in every 20 households trapping pests. “At that level, the accepted thinking is that you will have pretty good coverage.”



“Gareth who?”

(For more on local cats, see *Lola* letter next page)

'My Country Right or Wrong?'

An Aro Valley Contribution to the World War 1 Commemorations

Date Saturday 9th May
Sunday 10th May

Where Aro Valley Hall

A full programme of speakers, fish 'n' chip dinner and an historic walk to significant sites.

For registrations, enquiries and the programme:
community@arovalley.org.nz
Ph. (04) 384 8499



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Alexander Turnbull Library PACol-10155-10-2

Letters

Lola's tui-targetting causes concern



Dear editors,

Lola

While many people in the valley are quite attached to the affectionate Lola the cat – and I do admit she is a cute cat – it would be also nice if people can keep a watchful eye on the feline, as last week I rescued a tui from her jaws one early morning. As playful as she is, she is still a cat.

If it is expected that the park and surrounds will truly attract more native birds, with continued plantings, rat and possum control, and if Lola is going to be allowed to roam freely as she does, I hope that people keep an eye on the feline.

Personally I do not want her roaming at all. But as I am a minority on the issue of cats versus natives, she will continue to be a presence in the park. So bearing that in mind, please keep an eye out: she might not have a taste for pigeon, but she does have a taste for tui.

Regards, Hamish

P.S. As a side note, the tui was rescued alive and was taken to Wellington Zoo's The Nest for recovery. Lola was left staring at me pondering where her meal went.

Aro and mental health

Kia ora koutou,

I am writing in response to the small piece published about the potential for AVCC to run a workshop for mental health consumers. In the wake of safe spaces losing DHB funding in Newtown this seems like an opportunity for Aro Valley to step up and provide some support for those in need in our community.

I was sad to see published in the same piece an expression of concern for 'other' users of the community centre if the workshop went ahead. Although I understand that this opinion came from discussions within the community not the publication itself, I feel that this sort of message in a public domain is harmful and adds to the dominating negative

discourse about mental illness.

I understand also that mental health is a scary topic for many of us whether experienced or not. There is a great deal of the unknown in mental illness, but when it comes down to it we all have fluctuating mental health, as individuals and as a community. I believe it is the misunderstanding about what this means and the fear it can conjure which serve to perpetuate unwellness in all communities.

The belief that people who access mental health services are more dangerous than anyone else is unfounded and in fact they are alongside the young and the elderly as the most vulnerable members of our society. As a community we can support campaigns such as the 'like minds like mine' programme which are trying to normalise mental health discussions and stop mental illness being invisible.

The 1996 Mason inquiry into mental health awareness in New Zealand offered this comment: "It is fundamentally wrong that a vulnerable group in our society should be continually subjected to the comments and actions of those who possess an outcast mentality... We are optimistic enough to believe that a well-informed New Zealand public will then realise that [people with experience of mental illness] are people whom we should nurture and value."

If the proposed workshop is run by professionals it will be safe and productive though will still not replace the drop in service of the 'safe spaces' which have been shut down in Newtown. Kia kaha Aro Valley!

Sincerely, Zoe Joblin

Entrance Street Proposal: No stopping at all times

The City Council has received a request from the Waste Operations team to install broken yellow lines at the bend on the western side of Entrance Street. This will enable service trucks to collect rubbish and recycling from properties located along this stretch of the road and Norway Street, when vehicles are parked on the western bend. The decision is due to be approved by the Transport & Urban Development Committee on 16 April. Contact traffic engineer: lubna.abullah@wcc.govt.nz



New bike racks outside Aro Hall

Sing for Your Life back up and humming

Sian Torrington

The Aro Valley Sing for your Life sessions are back for 2015 with a new time. They are happening regularly on Fridays from 10.30am-12pm.

We'd love you to join us – Sing for your Life is inclusive and is open to all ages and abilities. We sing together in harmony, with piano accompaniment, as well as other instruments. Sometimes a ukelele, sometimes a double bass. We sing great songs from past and recent decades, and all get to experience the joy of singing with no auditions or music to read.

SFYL is run by Julian Raphael from Community Music Junction with Gabriele Gschwentner, a classically trained pianist, composer, singer, marimba player, psychologist and sacred clown. "Because we work in a group, each individual contribution helps to create an enormous texture and rhythm. It is team work which is non-hierarchical."

Julian has a lifetime of experience working with community choirs, and also founded the Wellington Community Choir and the Hutt Community Choir. But this is smaller, and super fun. We get to sing together and get to know each other a bit too. It's \$5 to join in, and all are welcome. We'd love to sing with you!

<http://communitymusicjunction.co.nz/Community/Sing+for+Your+Life.html>

Db4dance



The pre-school class performing "Going on a Bear Hunt"

Db4dance classes finished the last term of 2014 with a shared performance with the Wellington Community Children's Choir. It was a chance for all the children to perform in front of an audience and a proud moment for the families and friends.

This year, Db4dance classes for children are:

Thursdays until 2nd April

Pre-school 2.45-3.15pm Ballet and Jazz class 3.45-4.15pm

Enrol now!

info@db4dance.co.nz or visit www.db4dance.co.nz



Aro Fair

call for volunteers

If you have energy and time to help out either before, during or after the Aro Fair on **Saturday 21 March (and rain day Sunday 22 March)** please contact Kelvin Aris on:

Community@arovalley.org.nz
(04) 384-8499

or drop into the office at the Aro Valley Community Centre (you will be rewarded in Heaven)

Aro Valley Community Pre-school

FREE early childhood education for 3 and 4 year olds for up to 20 hours per week



We cater for children 2 to 5 years old

Hours: Monday to Friday 8.30 to 2.45

Fees: \$5.00 per hour for 2 year olds and for

3 and 4 year olds using more than 20 hours per week

We have places available now!

Phone 384 5156

Email: arovalley@clear.net.nz

Website: arovalleypreschool.blogspot.co.nz

Also a community playgroup for under 3 year olds, operates on Tuesday afternoons from 3.30 to 5.00 pm.

Contact Sacha Green for details at:

whanaukariki@gmail.com

Solar panel provider goes belly up

Right House, the company that installed the solar panels on Aro Hall following a fundraising campaign by independent action group Aro Solar last year, has gone belly up.

The company went into liquidation last month, forcing 130 staff out of jobs, and placing the ongoing maintenance and support of Aro Hall's panels into question.

This follows Contact and Meridian Energy's reduction at the end of last year of buyback rates for electricity generated from the solar panels.

Right House was set up in 2007 by then 100% state-owned Meridian Energy as an "energy efficiency and insulation

business" and was sold in 2011 to the international Mark Group, long before the government's 49% share float of Meridian in 2013.

Installing the solar panels was the result of a project by Aro Solar, who raised more than \$4,500 on the crowd funding platform Pledge Me, to gain equivalent funding from the Wellington City Council as part of its 'Smart Energy Challenge' scheme.

The panels were originally intended to save around \$450 in power bills per year, before AVCC's power provider Contact Energy halved its buyback rate for electricity from the panels last November, placing into question their value as an 'energy conservation' move.

Northern Rata – a valley treasure

Denis Asher

Courtesy of a generous Wellington City Council initiative (thanks Marlies), we have four new neighbours:

four northern rata (*Metrosideros robusta*) in the Aro Valley, now residing above the junction of Aro Street and Raroa Road.

But they are 'new' only because their once-numerous ancestors largely disappeared during the European settlement of Wellington, succumbing to axe, fire and then possum. Reference can be found in settler diaries and letters to the earlier "crimson forests and ridgelines" of the Valley area and its surrounds.

Ironically, after effectively extirpating *M. robusta*, Europeans then facilitated the introduction of its cousin, *M. excelsa*, the pohutukawa – a tree previously not found in the Wellington area but

restricted to the coasts and lakesides of the northern half of the North Island. Human enthusiasm for the pohutukawa and its opportunistic character have resulted in it now becoming a pest (i.e. an unwanted, aggressive outsider) species in places such as Australia, California and Southern Africa.

Though a specialised epiphyte (a plant that grows on another, without being a parasite), the northern rata is also readily planted straight into the ground. In the absence of suitable host rimu, kahikatea, miro, etc, the Aro Valley Restoration Project and others have done just that. In the past ten years we've planted out scores of locally sourced northern rata in the Valley. They're clearly doing well (especially when kept clear of weed and well-watered during our dry, windy summers); some are now 4+ metres and close to flowering. A red Valley is an interesting prospect.

Many thanks to Rangi and Kieran for their excellent relocating work! And to WCC for passing on these treasures. Ironically, these four were first briefly sited close to one of Wellington's best centrally located examples of the northern rata – that handsome example close to the junction of Abel Smith and Victoria Streets. There's another, of a similar size, just below the

Met Office, in private property, on the corner of Salamanca Road and Clermont Terrace. October and November are the months when they flower, and they are well worth a visit.

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Memorial Park Alliance revisits Te Aro traffic
Representatives of NZTA-led consortium the Memorial Park Alliance attended a meeting of the Aro Valley Community Council at the end of January to revisit earlier (public) discussions about the traffic light phasing and road-widening at the intersection of Willis and Abel Smith Streets and Karo Drive.

The final arrangements have disappointed locals, with some parents from Te Aro school rejecting suggestions that the new light phasing is safer for their children.

Meanwhile, in the wake of the Environmental Protection Agency's decision last year to halt progress on the Basin Reserve flyover, the Memorial Park Alliance has picked up other work and is filling time by turning Victoria Street into a "tree-lined boulevard" for the Wellington City Council.

Although the stated aim of the so-called 'Victoria Street Transformation Project' is to "enhance the pedestrian experience, with inner city parks and wider footpaths", the short-term impact has simply been to chop down a bunch of trees and close off the footpath on one side of the road to all pedestrian traffic.

In fact, the undisclosed intention of the project seems to be to replace on-street

parking with wider footpaths in order to better streamline cross-town traffic, in line with the faster moving east-west route created by the Memorial Park Alliance's Highway 1 road revisions.

No new pedestrian priority or cycle pathways across busy Victoria Street into town are created by the design, and there is no evidence that more pedestrians will come and use the new tree-lined areas designed for them, which appear simply to service and decorate a more efficient one-way system for motor vehicle traffic.

While the development adds a new cycle lane to Victoria Street, it also adds an additional (fourth) car lane and gets rid of the free-turning lane into Abel Smith Street, with its accompanying pedestrian-controlled crossing and traffic island. As a result, local traffic will be even further dictated to by the priorities of northbound cars along Highway 1.

Aro Valley restoration for the top of Epuni Street

Denis Asher of Aro Valley Restoration Project held a public meeting on 4 March to attract enthusiasm for restoring the large, neglected patch of bush at the top of Epuni Street.

"Some of us want to polish the jewel at the end of Epuni Street," Denis said. It's an easily ignored spot, bordered by

Tanera Park, Laura Ave and Mortimer Terrace. But it's surprisingly extensive – upwards of 20 hectares. "Crossed by Transpower's big electricity cables, punctured by huge pine, and in places deeply gorged, we think it needs at least a little weeding, trapping and planting-out of locally sourced species," says Denis.

"The project we have in mind is to work gradually, as time, resources and a suitable objective permit." There are already impressive stands of 6 metre plus mamaku, and extensive stands of mahoe. Some fuchsia have survived the possums. And titoki seedlings can be found (courtesy of NZ pigeon?).

"We can build on this, especially by clearing old man's beard, wattle and blackberry. Significant numbers of Kaka pass through (could they be nesting?). Tui seem as common as blackbirds. Lying between Zealandia, Polhill Gully and Central Park, it's clearly a natural avian staging point."

Care to help? This autumn would be an ideal time to start planting out pigeon wood, pukatea (in those deep, moist crevasses), matai and more.

The March 4 meeting was intended as a start to build a locally-based restoration group and set objectives. For more details contact Denis Asher **022 353 6078** or **denis.asher3@yahoo.co.nz**

Tommy's Aro Valley Specialist

zoe smith

is in the Valley this week if you would like to request an updated current market appraisal, please either call or email on zoe@tommys.co.nz to make an appointment.

Call free on 04 212 4377 or 021 856 887

zoesmith.co.nz

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Kai o Te Aro

Karen MacIntyre

The sunflowers are blooming and the bees and locals are loving all the flowers in the orchard up the top of Aro St.

The beginning of February marks the time known as first fruits or Lamas.

It marks the time when the sun is half way between the summer solstice and the equinox. The shadows are getting longer, time to start preparing for the year ahead, so get out and enjoy the sun while we have it.

Over the summer the gardens have bloomed thanks to the folk who have been watering them and loads of lovely sunshine. The wall in the secret garden is being replaced, but the tomatoes do not seem to mind. We have sadly said goodbye to Charles as he has moved to a new job up on the East Cape, and wish him well.

The compost bins in Aro park are being configured to allow for easier use and access to tend and turn the compost, thanks to Jamie and Liam.

Gardening together is a great way to connect with others, learn new gardening

skills, get out there and be with nature. For me I love learning about what is in season and to change my mind set of relying on the supermarket, while creating a more resilient community on all levels.

Get involved, turn up and garden with others in the weekends and the evenings.

Saturdays 10am, Next: 28 March at the Orchard.

Contact arogardener@gmail.com to find out more.

Te Aro School parents surveyed

Te Aro School parents network is endeavouring to challenge the Government's recent change to the school's decile rating by surveying parents about their economic circumstances. The shift in decile rating from 6 to 10 is likely to lose the school more than \$100,000 over five years, and is based on the income in areas where students live, rather than the actual income of those who attend the school. They have until the end of March to get responses from 90% of families at the school in order to receive the funding that Te Aro truly deserves. You can contact the **Aro Parents Network** on **Facebook**.

World War One stories wanted



Soldiers on crutches participating in a one-legged race, taken during World War I by Crown Studio Ltd of Wellington (Alexander Turnbull Library).

The organisers of *My Country Right or Wrong?* want local stories about World War One and to hear about places in Aro Valley that have a special significance. All contributions are welcome.

Please send your ideas to: Community@arovalley.org.nz or phone 385 3051.

The seminar and historic walk, adding the Valley's contribution to the WW100 commemorations, will be held on the weekend of the 9 -10 May at the Aro Valley Hall. Registration is essential.

Slow Boat RECORDS Music Quiz

EVERY THURSDAY
STARTING @ 7PM
HELD AT SOUTHERN CROSS

PRIZES TO BE WON EACH WEEK!

SOUTHERN CROSS Slow Boat Records

TUES THE ELECTRIC 8PM QUIZ

SOUTHERNCROSS

Day	Time	Activity & Cost	Contact
Monday	7.15am – 8.15am	Tai Chi Class (Koha)	Yi Ching Mao 384 3588
	6.00pm – 8.00pm	Capoeira (\$10 casual /\$40 - 8 classes)	Bobby Semau 027 6961708 bobbysemau@gmail.com
Tuesday	9.30pm – 11.30pm	ESOL English Language Class (Koha)	Wendy Vink: teacher Contact AVCC 384 8499 community@arovalley.org.nz
	12.00pm – 12.45pm	Sit and Be Fit (\$3 per class)	Kathy McConville Contact AVCC 384 8499 community@arovalley.org.nz
	1.45pm – 2.45pm	Yoga with Rebekah Rasmussen \$5 - some mats provided	Rebekah 027 306 7180
	7.00pm – 8.00pm	Pilates with Erica Casual \$15, Unwaged \$13 10 class concessions	Erica 292 7909 or 022 646 3994 elattughi@hotmail.com
Wednesday	7.15am – 8.15am	Tai Chi Class (Koha)	Lynsey 384 5520
	9.30pm – 11.30pm	ESOL English Language Class (Koha)	Wendy Vink: teacher Contact AVCC 384 8499 community@arovalley.org.nz
	6.30pm – 8.00pm	Starjam	Genevieve@starjam.org 212 4971 • 021 782 866
Thursday CSA Organic food pick up	9.30pm – 11.30pm	ESOL English Language Class (Koha)	Wendy Vink: teacher Contact AVCC 384 8499 community@arovalley.org.nz
	3.30pm – 4.30pm	Kids Jazz Dance Classes \$12 per class / \$100 per term	Debbie: db4dance@gmail.com
	6.00pm – 7.00pm	Samba from Brazil Hillary Mitchell & Fabiola Stevenson	Hillary Mitchell Hillary.Reid@vuw.ac.nz 021 230 8732
	7.30pm – 9.00pm	Yoshukai Karate (\$10 a week – pay what you can afford. Includes 2 nd weekly class Northland Community Centre)	Colin Berry 027 249 5342 • 475 9985
Friday CSA Organic food pick up	7.15am – 8.15am	Tai Chi Class (Koha)	Lynsey 384 5520
	10.30pm -12.00pm	Sing For Your Life - community singing. Come along any time to have a great sing and a cuppa - \$5 a time	Julian Raphael 802 5398 communitymusic@extra.co.nz
Saturday	9.00am – 10.00am	Yoga \$5 per class	Maggie Kelly maggiek52@gmail.com
	1.00 – 3.00pm (last Saturday of the month)	Capoeira Free	Bobby Semau 027 696 1708 bobbysemau@gmail.com
Sunday	2.00pm – 3.00pm	Small Voices - Munting Tinig Children's Choir and Filipino culture - All Welcome	Miriam Vilalba 0221 757 243



VALLEY VOICE

Editors: Max Rashbrooke & Tim Bollinger

All contributions and feedback to:

aro.voice@gmail.com

or 022 694 0871

Valley Voice is published on behalf of

Aro Valley Community Council
48 Aro St
Wellington

Opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the writers and not of the Aro Valley Community Council (AVCC) unless adopted at a general meeting.

AVCC co-chairs 2014-15:

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Charles Barrie

Secretary: Sarah Jane Parton

Treasurer: Rachel Griffiths

Committee members:

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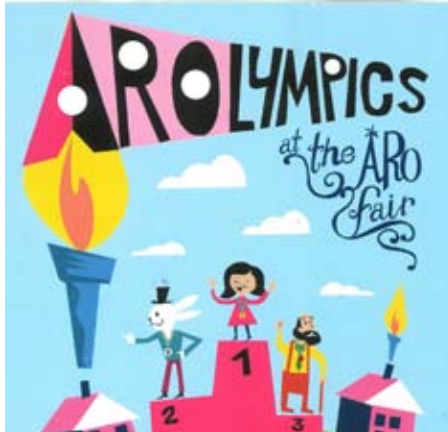
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Torch Relay and Opening Ceremony
FRIDAY 20th March. Top of Holloway
Road at 7.30pm to the Garage Project

Upstream: the Art Trail temporary public art exhibition from 5-8 March saw original work from 12 emerging artists installed in Brooklyn's Central Park (an example is pictured below)



Chalking outside Aro Hall

Pam Whittington

8/06/1933 - 22/01/2015



Long time community worker and founding Aro Valley Community Centre co-ordinator, Pamela (Pam) Dayrell Whittington (QSM - JP), died peacefully at Wellington Hospital on 22 January, age 81.

As a resident of lower Ohiro Road, where she brought up ten children with her husband Jack, Pam voluntarily took on the care of many of Wellington's homeless and dispossessed. She was there at the creation of the Aro Valley Community Centre and the fight to gain the land for Aro park from the Salvation Army in the late 1970s.

Pam was active in the early days of the Aro Valley pre-school when it was still based in the Hall, and founded the Aro Valley school holiday programme.

For many years Pam worked out of the Citizens' Advice Bureau based at the Aro Valley Community Centre and was the first paid community worker in Wellington, working for the Wellington Inner City Mission. She founded the country's first food bank out of St Peter's church in Willis Street, for which she later received the Queens Service Medal. She also founded Vincent's art workshop, which has provided rehabilitative art



Above: Pam (left) at Aro Fair in the late 1990s with legendary Wellington street artist Ruffo, at far right. Right: Pam with Neil Patel, at the opening of the Aro Park public toilets c. 2000

sessions and exhibitions for former psychiatric patients (soon to be discontinued), and was heavily involved with the Catacombs drop-in centre in Willis Street. She regularly volunteered at the Wellington soup kitchen, and at the night shelter, and was one of the first volunteers at the 'Room at the Inn' Christmas lunch held free for all comers each year at Aro Hall since the 1980s.

Pam was also active in opposition to the Inner City Bypass, and many other local community campaigns and activities.

In 1995 Pam published some of her thoughts and experiences of living with and looking after people living rough in Wellington called *Don't Kick Me When I'm Down*. She was also responsible for the *Wellington Survival Guide*, listing free services, activities and resources for Wellingtonians without income.

Pam's Funeral service was held at the Aro Valley Community Centre Park on 27 January, where everyone from family members, friends, community leaders and gang members came together to honour the woman they described as "small in stature but staunch in spirit".



We invite anyone who knew Pam to please send us your thoughts, memories and stories of Pam for publication in a future edition of *Valley Voice*.
Write to: aro.voice@gmail.com

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VILDERS
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Goldsmith artist Dorthe Kristensen of Vilders Gallery in Aro street, makes contemporary jewellery with individuality and flair. Vilders also recycles gold jewellery inspired by making it sustainable. Bring in your old gold and Vilders will work with you to give it new life.

New website, now buy online.
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