

Chapter One: If At First You Don't Succeed (1840-1871)

*** The founding of Auckland**

As a British colonial settlement Auckland came into existence in 1840 as the site chosen for his capital by the first governor, Lieutenant William Hobson. A 3,000 acre segment hinging on Mt. Eden (Maungawhau), the highest volcanic cone (643 feet) on the isthmus, was purchased from local Ngati Whatua Maori chiefs. What principally appealed were the splendid Waitemata and Manukau harbours and proximity to both fertile land and river access both north and south. For its first decade, Auckland's rationale was to provide a base for and service the entourage of an infant administration

Within a year nearly 2,000 people were living in primitive wood and raupo dwellings, a number which had swollen to 3,500 by mid-century. A census conducted in 1841 counted 250 mechanics, 150 agricultural labourers, 100 shopkeepers and 100 domestic servants as vastly outnumbering the 125 recorded as 'upper class.' While plans had already been laid to reclaim Commercial Bay, the original landing spot, and a 'town plan' drawn up by Felton Mathew, the Surveyor-General, the principal obstacle confronting the settlers was in getting from point A to point B along tracks which were often not even metalled. And what became roughly the line of Queen St, the Ligar Canal, doubled as an open sewer.

*** First ideas of local government**

Municipal reform in England instilled grandiose ideas of establishing units of local self-government. While dressed up in constitutional finery, their chief aim was to offload expenditure onto struggling settlements. Several measures were passed, the first being the *Municipal Corporations Ordinance 1842*, and being quite unwanted, never came to fruition. 'User pay' -- especially in the form of rates -- was even less welcome than winter quagmires and offensive cesspits. Better to rely on public subscriptions and the occasional Government grant to maintain roads. At least in 1844 it was decided to widen Queen St by twenty feet.

The 1846 New Zealand Constitution Act passed by the British Parliament was widely condemned as premature, unworldly and unworkable, and its provisions for elaborate boroughs in European-controlled areas ridiculed. Notwithstanding its depiction as the first rung on the ladder of self-government, Governor George Grey secured its suspension and Auckland's interests remained under the stewardship of Government administration. In 1850 a quasi-local body did appear in the shape of the quaintly-named 'Hundred of Auckland' and three wardens were elected. However, as their main function was the management of waste Crown lands and the pasturing of stock thereon, they were irrelevant as regards the tasks of firefighting, constructing roads and warding off pestilence.

*** The 'grate' borough of Auckland 1851-52**

Then in 1851, without warning or request, the exasperated Grey issued an astounding charter which created the Borough of Auckland. Complete with a radical franchise -- all adult males occupying a tenement -- aldermen, and such expansive boundaries that a 'capital' was designated, the council was to be responsible for almost every public function, including the police, schools and hospitals. Vigorous elections at which 72% of the 1,400-strong electorate voted, were duly held. Despite much goodwill, the experiment foundered within a year. Confronted with a plethora of problems and the Governor's failure to deliver on promises of assistance, the Council balked at actually striking a rate. 'Country' members jibbed at having to

ride up to fifteen miles to attend meetings. Amidst unproductive wrangling, the Council ceased functioning and a second election in 1852 failed to see sufficient councillors elected.

*** Failure second time around**

Initially the 1852 Constitution Act offered a sounder platform for the introduction of local government, although it was unclear whether the 'municipal institutions' envisaged were the provincial governments themselves or subordinate agencies of their creation. To the Auckland Provincial Council it was the latter and in quick order gave the now-prospering town of 9,000 a city council bolstered by a £3,000 foundation grant. Its boundaries were severely contracted, some functions such as education withdrawn, and an obligation to suppress an extensive range of nuisances such as Sabbath-breaking and houses of ill repute, added. Though it worked diligently, the council soon passed into oblivion, a victim of constitutional incompetence and the arrows of those determined to stop a rate being levied. Its defenders were few and easily overcome.

For seven years local matters were effectively under Provincial Government control. Residents were encouraged to collectively pay for maintaining the streets outside their doors, the building of a sewer started by the defunct City Council continued and wealthier citizens could bring water into their houses from a private main drawing on the Domain Springs. The vast majority lugged buckets from standpipes. Sporadic attempts to re-establish elected local government enlisted almost no popular support.

*** Scaled-down machinery of the 1860s**

By 1862 circumstances had changed: votes for public works in Auckland were receiving declining sympathy in the Provincial Council and a damning report noted that such works had virtually ceased. An elective Board of Works charged with streets, bridges, drainage, water supply and markets, but without any endowments, was imposed upon an unenthusiastic citizenry. Only 15% of the 1,400 eligible ratepayers voted at the election, at which a labourer topped the poll. Little was expected and little delivered. Members resigned, staff went unpaid, and finally the rate which was struck went uncollected. Even the chairman refused to pay on legal grounds. Sustained into 1863 only by Provincial grants, it disbanded with little regret. Historically, its real significance is its location at the very beginning of continuous local control of Auckland affairs.

A hiatus was avoided by the Provincial Government already having passed specific legislation to establish a City Board for Auckland. Underpinned well legislatively, and headed by a salaried chairman, the City Board of Commissioners outdid their predecessors. Within a few months a rate was struck and 94% collected, committees functioning and 'the rivers of mud' which constituted many city streets re-levelled and bedded with scoria. A propensity among citizens and firms for ripping up streets was curbed. A professional fire brigade under the ironically-named Asher Asher was formed, and the main streets became lit by gas. However, the stench which pervaded much of the town attested to slow progress in laying a sewer network and an adequate water supply remained a distant goal.

*** Modest achievements of the Commissioners**

Although the Commissioners worked long and diligently, they were always at full stretch. The capital (and hence Government spending) was lost to Wellington in 1865 and the Land Wars took many staff away. An economic downturn in the mid 1860s saw the Provincial Government's contribution to revenue plummet from 30% to nil and disenchantment among the

citizens mounted. Services were radically cut and the Board almost ceased to function. Regarded as a compromise, the City Board under its final chairman, Philip Philips, strove to serve the population of by then some 13,000 as best as an unsupportive press, unsympathetic provincial government allowed. And from 1869 it lived in the shadow of a growing political demand that Auckland was sufficiently mature to warrant the bestowal of the 'proper' local government allowed by the *Municipal Corporations Act 1867*.

G.W.A. Bush 5.8.98

Chapter 2. Building a solid city (1871-1918)

*** The new city council and Auckland's condition**

While decisive, the proclamation creating the Auckland City Council in April 1871 was not the product of thorough reform. Discord over the means of rectifying defects in the City Board's operation led to procrastination. Provincial Council legislation was possibly illegal, a special Act for Auckland proved unacceptable to Parliament and in 1870 Wellington donned the cloak of municipality. Eventually enterprising citizens mounted a petition for incorporation under the 1867 Act, to which both provincial and central authorities acceded. To sectional disapproval, and having 'dishonourably' declined a request to resign and fight an election, the retiring City Commissioners became *en masse* the ten-strong inaugural City Council. Philips, a hardware merchant, was unanimously appointed mayor and voted a £250 annual allowance. The changeover was crowned by a belated celebration dinner for three hundred held in St.Mungo's cafe.

There was, however, no justification for basking indolently in the new-found, elevated status, for though Auckland's population was almost stagnant, its problems were continuously mounting. A pastiche of contemporary comments include ones about Auckland being 'filthily dirty and squalid', its poor but numerous hotels, 'streets bearing the stamp of poverty and want', 'dust which is perfectly blinding' and 'smells unrivalled among New Zealand towns.' In unison the press warned that there would be no excuse if steady improvement failed to occur, and counselled in favour of 'unostentatious simple dignity' instead of all the 'expensive paraphernalia of full civic power.' Principal items on the agenda of the first formal meeting in April 1871 were appointment of various officers, design of City seal, winding up City Board affairs, transferring of City endowments, acquiring office premises, and state of the streets.

*** Basic needs come first**

Quite certainly, Aucklanders of the 1870s primarily charged their City Council with providing and upgrading essential physical services. These were broadly defined as streets, drainage, water supply, prevention of nuisances, and the related control through by-laws of a multitude of private activities.

The street network was potentially a bottomless pit of expenditure. Early improvements included laying asphalt strips for pedestrians and the metalling of eleven main roads. Rows over substandard private roads and responsibility for those on Harbour Board reclamations abounded. Street trees started sprouting, but vandals were not far behind. The percentage of sealed streets grew and there were occasional spectacular achievements such as the building of Grafton Bridge (1910) and the transformation of Jermyn St into the major new outlet of Anzac Ave during World War I. Taking the steps to instal a proper sewerage system seem to paralyse

the Council. It long tolerated a night-cart collection combined with -- by 1900 -- the discharge of raw sewage from five points into the Waitemata Harbour. Links with infant mortality and contagious diseases were discounted. After procuring conflicting reports and much inter-authority negotiation, the Council finally consented to the establishment of an independent drainage board and establishment of treatment works which would discharge roughly screened sewage off Okahu Point. It opened in 1914. As regards the maintenance of public health, the Council's record was generally deplorable until its handling of a quasi-smallpox epidemic in 1913 and ore vitally, the great influenza epidemic of 1918. Until its Victoria Park destructor from 1905 started incinerating sixty tons of refuse per day, the Council's policy on refuse disposal was best described as 'out of sight, out of mind.' However, it did maintain a twice-weekly domestic collection.

*** Water for drinking and fighting fires**

A city of wooden buildings was always in peril from major fires, but capacity to fight them was utterly primitive. The Council started a 'professional' brigade in 1876, which refused to attend fires beyond the Council's boundaries. A steam fire engine and telescopic ladder were finally acquired, but in 1906 the Government legislated for the creation of special fire boards, the costs of which were partly met by insurance company levies. A standard complaint was the lack of water pressure for firefighting, and the goal of obtaining an ample and reliable water supply dominated the Council's attention for its first fifty years. Report followed report and a welter of possible sources, including the Waikato River, were investigated in the 1870s. The acquisition of Western Springs bought time, but imprudent sales to suburban local bodies and declining quality of the Western Springs source, culminated in a water famine in 1900. Streets were washed with salt water and hydraulically-operated lifts ceased functioning. Procrastination was cast aside and the die firmly cast for developing a series of reservoir dams in the Waitakere Ranges. By 1907 the first Waitakere water was flowing in city pipes.

*** Regulation, by-laws and public health**

Perhaps with an eye on possible revenue, the Council by 1872 had issued a veritable torrent of by-laws. Commercial activities were licensed and regulated and a vast range of nuisances proscribed. Fair game were wandering goats, hawkers, saloons, chimneys, tooting of trumpets, contaminated milk, unhygienic food shops, betting in the streets, and horse taxicabs. Often the bylaws provoked opposition from vested interests, and the first building regulations were not invariably applied. For the Council it was hard work -- the police were understandably loathe to serve as detection agents and magistrates apt to impose only nominal fines for proven breaches. The management of traffic figured ever more prominently: the first motor vehicle was registered in 1904 and in 1913 by-laws laid down 'the rules of the road' and made driving licences mandatory. After the first major revision and consolidation of by-laws in 1917, over 900 regulations still remained on the books.

Given the state of medical knowledge, issues of health, sanitation and disease were constantly lurking to which the Council could not be oblivious. It contrived to stave off becoming responsible for the general hospital after the abolition of the provinces in 1876, but temporally ran specialist establishments for the treatment of smallpox and venereal disease, the latter also being intended to lessen prostitution. By 1872 the church-controlled Grafton Gully cemetery was suffering from overcrowding and the Council was forced to intervene. After much vacillation over suitable sites, in 1883 it acquired a huge tract at Waikumete Hill, ten miles

westward, as a cemetery reserve. By 1918 the basic layout was fixed and shortly afterwards a crematorium was built.

*** The first utilities**

Though in general not notably progressive, nineteenth century councillors realised that for Auckland to be 'no mean city', its amenities had to encompass more than essential physical services -- but only if finances were buoyant. From 1876 municipalities were required to provide abattoirs. The Council opened one at Western Springs, extremely close to the water supply source, and despite becoming totally surrounded by residential development and condemned in 1901 as insanitary, there it stayed until a new facility was opened in 1908 at Westfield, next to the private slaughter houses. In 1873 the Council erected on a central site a building for marketing produce. Used also for concerts, as a Paddy's market and as the Council's stables, it rarely thrived and when the adjacent Town Hall was opened in 1911, it had become an embarrassing eyesore. Modern new markets on Harbour Board land allowed demolition of original market building in 1918. To force down fish prices, the Council opened a fish market in 1914, and shortly afterwards, with the courage of its convictions, became a trawler owner and direct fish vendor itself.

*** Catering for leisure and cultural pursuits**

Endeavours as regards culture and recreation were more mainstream. It quickly took the plunge into public swimming baths, although its first facility filled and emptied according to the tides. In their first year (1885) freshwater baths built behind the City Market attracted 18,500 patrons. Achievements then became quite dizzying: scarcely had bathers taken their first dip at the Shelly Beach baths in 1914 (their numbers swollen by the daring innovation of mixed bathing), than their choice was broadened by the advent of the downtown Tepid Baths and the huge open-air Parnell pool. From the outset the Council set about rectifying the fact that not a single park was inherited from the City Board. The first fruit was Western Park in 1879, the year that Albert Park was transferred to Council control by harassed Improvement Commissioners. An even bigger prize -- the 196 acre Auckland Domain -- soon followed and the first park in the forest-clad Waitakere Ranges (1912) was made somewhat more accessible by the construction of the start of the Scenic Drive. With the major, James Parr, the driving force, there was from 1911 a aggressive acquisition of parks and reserves. In many played the Municipal Band, first formed in 1873, and impressively reformed in 1924 as the Municipal Military Band.

Amenities that made definite architectural statements also arose. Having taken over 6,000 volumes from the defunct Mechanics' Institute and Provincial Council libraries, the Council built an imposing combined library, art gallery and municipal offices, the first substantial local body building in Auckland (1887). Sir George Grey donated his magnificent collection of works and the library diversified, although a children's room was a low priority. By 1918 the presence of five branch libraries justified the title of public library system. The art gallery was for long a poor relation, notwithstanding the bequest of 105 framed paintings and sketches by James Mackelvie. It was renovated and enlarged in 1913, this enabling the holdings of the Old Colonists' Museum to be finally displayed. Real municipal grandeur only came with the Town Hall. Discord over the suitability of the wedge-shaped site, funding, and tender prices were forgotten in the ten days of festivities which marked its opening, complete with a clock and organ donated by former mayors, in 1911. As a monument marking the City's coming-of-age, it stood comparison with any of its Australasian counterparts.

*** Conduits of energy and transport**

Very commendably, the Council's initial motives as regards developments in public transport and energy were to prevent Auckland's interests being damaged by a badly-managed private monopoly. In 1882 it gave a twenty-one year concession to a horse tramway company, which, however, eventually failed and turned its attention to getting the best deal from a queue of questionable electric tramway promoters. The thirty-year concession wrapped a tight regulatory blanket around the successful bidders. The operators and the Council seemed in permanent dispute over overcrowding, noise, Sunday services (a 1918 poll sanctioned normal operations), straphanging, union rules and extensions to the system. Municipalization seemed the only answer. Better results were achieved re the introduction of electric power. Action was proceeded by the usual conflicting expert reports, but in 1908 the first current was generated from the adapted destructor. It was soon outmoded and replaced by a coal-fired station near to King's Wharf. By 1917 there were 8,000 consumers and unbounded confidence in an electrical future.

*** The inevitability of territorial expansion**

Auckland's expansion made the provision of utilities pressing and highlighted the witlessness of fixing boundaries which confined the City Council to one square mile. It was soon built over, raising the obvious question of incorporating neighbouring boroughs and highway districts. Auckland City was far from the acme of progress or efficiency, but it was light years ahead of its constricting neighbours. Dazzled by promises of receiving water, drainage, fire and telephone services, Ponsonby, Karangahape and Grafton joined up in 1882. Inspired by the City Council, a 'Greater Auckland' movement emerged in 1901, but suburban local bodies long resisted, preferring independence even at the cost of a precarious backwardness. However, faced by possible Government intervention and an outright refusal to disguise their inadequacies by further resort to special purpose boards, many then toppled like dominoes. Ratepayer-endorsed amalgamations occurred with Arch Hill (1913), Grey Lynn (1914), Parnell, Remuera and tiny Eden Terrace (1915) and finally Epsom (1917). Although at least seven other local bodies declined 'marriage', Auckland City's population had doubled to 70,000. The evils of fragmented authority and parochialism had been somewhat curbed.

*** Widening horizons at fifty**

The City Council optimistically prepared for its fiftieth jubilee in 1921 as the leading stakeholder in city affairs. Its record included building housing for low-income workers, planning a model garden suburb for Orakei, enlisting under the flag of town planning and promoting metropolitan cooperation. It did not shirk from the fiscal consequences of fostering expansion and development. Though it constructed markets, an abattoir, water and power supplies, swimming baths, still-magnificent Town Hall and Art Gallery edifices, responsibly cut its cloth during several depressions and was suitably patriotic during World War I, it was beloved of the press as an Aunt Sally. In Auckland's transformation from a small provincial town of 'nondescript irregularity' to the dominant North Island centre, the City Council was materially involved.

G.W.A. Bush 5.8.98

Chapter 3. On the trail of the modernising city (1919-1945)

The quarter-century separating the ends of the two World Wars was as disorienting for the Council as for the general populace. The booming prosperity of the 1920s was obliterated by the retrenchment of the Great Depression and then the austerity imposed by six years of all-out war.

Throughout these blasts the city kept expanding -- 65,000 in 1918, 128,000 in 1945 --, as did the demands on municipal services and facilities.

*** Arrival of the motorcar**

The inexorable influx of motor vehicles -- their number doubling to 25,000 in the six years ending 1920 -- made the Sabbatarians campaign to halt the continentalising of Sundays quaintly irrelevant. It compelled both an end to the toleration of laissez-faire behaviour by drivers and a complete review of roading policy. From 1923 pedestrians were compelled to 'keep to the left' on footpaths. In 1926 control of moving traffic was reclaimed from the police, but warfare over the regulations of taxicabs was endemic and the Council was relieved when it surrendered this thankless task to the Transport Board in 1937. The most startling change in roading was not in new major thoroughfares (only one, the Waterfront Drive, made possible by the Tamaki railway deviation, was built), but in the width, surfacing and ambience of streets. The 1920s were the era of concreting, and the 1930s of sealing hitherto gravelled residential suburban streets. The Council was also a prime mover of a project located ten miles beyond its boundaries, the Centennial Memorial Drive (1939).

*** Reflecting changing preferences in recreation**

From earlier commitments to widen and diversify facilities for outdoor recreation and enjoyment the Council never wavered. It acquired or upgraded a string of parks, including Motuihe Island, the Parnell Rose Garden and -- most significantly, invaluable stretches of the bushclad Waitakere Ranges later to form the nucleus of the Centennial Memorial Park. Two facilities enterprisingly built with unemployment relief labour in the mid 1930s were both at Western Springs -- the Chamberlain Park golf course and the motor camp. The latter was a war victim, converted into a transit camp. On its opening in 1922 the zoo at Western Springs already ranked best in New Zealand. Holdings were regularly augmented by the generosity of private donors. A cause celebre was the 1925 escape of a leopard which remained free for a fortnight and titillated many a conversation. In 1930, the mayor, George Baidon, delivered the first known mayoral radio broadcast, his topic being the future of the zoo.

On the indoor front, the physical shortcomings of the library became increasingly distracting for John Barr, the veteran Librarian, although another six branch libraries came on-stream. For art lovers, prospects were even gloomier: between 1921 and 1945 six separate initiatives to establish a gallery of decent standard and space foundered. For a while music lovers enjoyed richer fare. The City Organist presented to declining audiences an annual average of forty 'severely classical' recitals during the 1920s. He persuaded the Council to subsidize a 120-voice choir which he conducted until its dissolution in the mid 1930s. The Municipal Military Band pumped out 200 concerts a year, for a period being featured on radio. It was that same medium's soaring popularity, together with the advent of talking pictures and the fiscal retrenchment of the Depression, which ended the Council's support of public musical entertainment.

*** The citizens want -- the City Council provides!**

The 1920s were the heyday of the Council as owner of utilities and commercial entrepreneur: at one stage it sold water, electricity and fish, operated the tramways and an abattoir, and even commenced the process of acquiring the Auckland Gas Company. Already a victim of the 'tall poppy syndrome' of uncooperative neighbouring boroughs, it was repeatedly forced to decide between the interests of its own citizens and those of greater Auckland. Forbidden to make a profit as such, the abattoir could exact fees for stock killed at private works for domestic consumption and this often placed the two on a collision course. Major extension to chilling

facilities and stock accommodation were in train by 1945. By contrast, being in the fishing business lost its appeal as deficits mounted. In 1924 the trawlers were sold at a substantial loss, although the retail fish market continued.

*** Supplying water and electricity: operating the trams**

Space permits only the sketchiest account of the water, electricity and tramway ventures. With the demand for electricity insatiably climbing, the Council in 1920 formulated plans to triple generating capacity. However, suburban bodies were energising a two-pronged campaign aimed at getting the Government to construct hydro stations and retailing the electricity through a system of elected power boards. They won, with the Council graciously serving as a willing midwife. In 1922 all its assets were transferred to the Auckland Electric Power Board for £525,000. As regards water, the Council so diligently expanded its Waitakere sources as if to make supply shortages a thing of the past. However, buoyed by their electricity triumph suburban bodies started complaining about overcharging and impure water, citing the creation of a water board as the best solution. They had sufficient pull to procure a Royal Commission of Enquiry in 1927, but its report vindicated the Council's position and performance. With daily consumption almost tripling between 1920 and 1945, some shortages did recur during wartime, but plans to tap the copious Hunua catchment were already being developed.

The Council ran the nine-route 27 miles tramway system for a decade from 1919. It completed several major extensions and double-tracking and in the mid-twenties waged a vigorous war with private pirate buses, resolved only when transport licensing was introduced nationally in 1926, a year when the Auckland trams carried 63,000,000 passengers. Following a 1927 poll defeat of an expansion loan proposal, the whole question of isthmus public transport became enmeshed in inter-authority local politics. A Royal Commission of Enquiry held in 1928 recommended the creation of an independent directly-election Transport Board, a solution in which the disheartened City Council unenthusiastically acquiesced. The undertaking was transferred without compensation, John Allum, who chaired the City's Tramways Committee, becoming the first chairman.

*** Planning houses but not a civic centre**

Driven by social conscience, the City Council became steadily more involved in housing and its planning. In 1924 it built fifty workers' homes in Grey Lynn and was a pioneer in doggedly working towards its first town planning scheme, which was adopted in 1938. Its first upheld objection to a building application on town planning principles occurred in 1929. A 1934 survey showed that one-third of the houses inspected were structurally defective, thus beginning a focus on blighted inner-city areas and insanitary overcrowded housing. Another survey in 1944 revealed 3,000 desperate cases. From 1945 the Council acted as guarantor for some 110 approved mortgages where lending exceeded normal bank limits.

The stillborn civic centre of the 1920s illustrated that attention to planning but not to politics is a recipe which courts disaster. Following the shifting of the city markets, the City Engineer, Walter Bush, ambitiously suggested its use for a civic centre. Even downgrading into a municipal administration block failed to get ratepayer approval in 1921, but undeterred the Council continued to acquire and raze properties and sponsored a design competition. The winning entry envisaged two massive buildings fronting a huge formal square. Ratepayers were less entranced and decisively rejected it. Subsequently, a Civic Centre Commission produced an even more monumental scheme, but thoroughly embarrassed, the Council in 1927 washed its hands of the whole idea. For the Council it was an inglorious chapter best quickly buried,

although three elements -- the location of the central library, the underground carpark and a major auditorium -- actually became reality more than fifty years later.

*** The final throes of `Greater Auckland'**

Having gathered in nine surrounding local bodies, the impetus driving the `Greater Auckland' movement was not entirely spent. With costly residential development imminent, Point Chevalier voted for amalgamation in 1921. Diehard resistance by Avondale Borough's councillors in 1927 did not sway its citizens from opting to link up with Auckland City, a union which swelled the City's area by 40%. Heavily influenced by the proposed Waterfront Drive and the Government's development of a garden suburb, the Orakei Road Board, with its rural neighbour, Tamaki, willingly in tow, consigned its future to Auckland City in 1928. There territorial expansion ceased, although but for imposing an ill-thought condition, the City could have gathered in Mt. Albert Borough in 1931. Suburban local bodies for whom preservation of existence was paramount notwithstanding their inadequacy to cope with development, grasped the lifeline of the special purpose board model exemplified by the drainage, electric power and tramways arrangements.

*** Coping with depression and world war**

In many respects the pushful, achieving decade of Sir James Gunson's mayoralty (1915-25) was to represent the pinnacle of endeavour in the first century. A succession of major loans was approved, new functions borne, and the Council's receipts first passed £1,000,000. Much of the succeeding twenty years were to be blighted by depression and then the Second World War.

For the City Council, the Great Depression (1929-35) mean three things -- managing an increasing complexity of Government-subsidised relief projects (involving 1,700 men in 1933); floating almost no new loans; ruthless retrenchment in every corner. Average annual rate increases of nearly 9% in the 1920s plummeted to 1.6% in the early 1930s - no surprise, when in 1930 20% of rates were unpaid and defaulters were allowed to expunge arrears by serving as unskilled labourers for the Council. Sixty staff were made redundant while others took a 10% salary cut in 1931. Senior officers lost another 5% in 1932. It was a grim holding operation, with the Council prominent in organising food and clothing appeals, but there was the spin-off of new parks, widened roads and the Western Springs Stadium.

Because of the threat of Japanese invasion, the presence of American troops, the severe shortage of supplies, and its duration, World War II disrupted Council activities more comprehensively than had World War I. Staff numbers dropped by 40%. A vast array of works and initiatives were shelved or scaled down. These included the introduction of traffic lights, extension of the Centennial Memorial Parks, construction of the Grey's Avenue flats, planning of an airport, and work on a metropolitan planning scheme. Other casualties were existing amenities: Military bases occupied parts of parks and the margin of water supply over water demand shrank alarmingly. The Council was involved in almost every facet of civil defence, organising the digging of miles of trenches and the tunnels under Albert Park. It sought to boost both morale and moral responsibility and organised drives to collect strategic materials such as rubber and metal. Hundreds of staff enlisted for active service and for several years the mayor, John Allum, almost lived at the Town Hall.

Chapter 4. Thinking and being metropolitan (1945-1971)

The City Council's attitude to the surging expansion which characterised post-war Auckland was ambivalent. As a proportion of the metropolis its population steadily declined from half in 1945, when two-thirds of employment was already outside the central core, to less than a quarter in 1971. Yet the coordination and leadership needed to address a variety of urgent metropolitan needs heavily depended on the City Council. Its vision was necessarily bifocal -- inwards on its own citizens' needs and outwards towards the wider and widening setting of which it remained the heart.

*** Better roads, better road management**

Although the Council did construct the Dominion Rd interchange (part of the planned Governmental motorway network) in 1967, its primary concern was with managing street traffic. In the fifties both horse troughs and horse-drawn street-cleaning carts disappeared and tram tracks were lifted after the tramway system finally closed in 1956. Generally the Council was an enterprising provider of streets trees, which numbered 9,000 in 1955. Rubberised bitumen street surfaces were laid from 1958 and a decade later Vulcan Lane pioneered the conversion of streets into pedestrian malls. Although measures to control traffic -- automated lights (1946), compulsory stops (1952) and driving in lanes (1962) -- were constantly being improved, they were overshadowed by 'the parking problem'. The first off-street parking lot appeared in 1947, the first parking meters in 1953 and the first municipal parking building (Britomart Place) in 1958. However, not even the Council's excellent Traffic Department could actually stem the onset of ever-worsening congestion.

*** Water for all of Auckland**

Although the 1948 opening of the Lower Nihotipu Dam (then the biggest in New Zealand) enabled recurrent water shortage crises to be survived, it reinforced the Council's determination to 'head to the Hunuas'. In that catchment, the Cossey's Creek Dam, opened in 1955, yielded a daily flow equal to half the output of all the Waitakere sources, and by 1959 nearly all local bodies were purchasing water off Auckland City. It was followed in 1965 by the huge Upper Mangatawhiri reservoir, the largest headworks which the City Council ever constructed. By then, however, the Council had without coercion agreed to transfer control of its bulk supply to the nascent Auckland Regional Authority, although it continued managing the undertaking until 1967. No doubt the Council was mightily relieved to have got shot of the emotional issue of whether to fluoridate the water supply in the interests of dental health.

*** The regional dimension of parks and libraries**

The portfolio of parks was further diversified and enriched. It included the 100 acre tract of Churchill Park (1945), the resumption of Motuihe Island (1948), the popular Hauraki Gulf picnic venue, Brown's Island (1954), a gift of former mayor Sir Ernest Davis, and -- after flirting with a Coney Island playground -- the sensitive redevelopment of Western Springs. Although the advent of motels made resurrection of the Western Springs motor camp redundant, the Chamberlain Park Golf Course hosted 75,000 rounds in 1966, the same year a massive conversion of the zoo into a spacious, open 'garden' was announced. The Council also pledged in principle to transfer its extensive holdings in the Waitakere Ranges to the Auckland Regional Authority. As regards the library system, improvements in access such as the introduction of mobile facilities (1950), and the opening of a new branch in Glen Innes (1961), were

transcended by the commissioning of Stage I of the superb new Central Library in 1971. Although the Old Colonists' Museum became a victim of overcrowding back in 1957, relocation of the Central Library would give the Art Gallery, already pre-eminent nationally, the space to flower even further.

*** Mirroring the mores of society**

Even in relatively recent times, the Council's power to undertake, regulate and prohibit activities was quite prodigious. In 1959 it completed a massive revision of its by-laws, one allowing the unrestricted use of *pinus radiata* as a building material. It presided over the liberalisation of Sunday entertainment from 1953, but was somewhat flummoxed in the late 1960s when unauthorised street protests became a favourite activist tool. Its attempts to curtail the growing cacophony seemingly inseparable from urban existence were earnest but generally unavailing. Although its sewage disposal farm was closed in 1932, nightsoil collections only ended in 1969, and the Council ran a highly-profitable sheep farm on Motuihe. With half its area serviced by combined sewerage-stormwater reticulation, the mammoth task of separating the two commenced in 1969. Until the mid fifties it organised annual 'Rat Week' campaigns. More positively, the abattoir doubled its killings between 1947 and 1967 and major modernisation was pending and rents from the city's fruit and produce markets helped the Council's income, although a 1956 experiment of a retail open market badly foundered. A compost plant which processed suitable refuse commenced commercial production in 1963, although its principal mission was to reduce the volume of the stream of waste, not trade at a profit.

*** At last giving planning its due**

The chief consequence of the passage of the 1953 Town & Country Planning Act was that responsibility for the production of physical order and amenity finally had to be taken seriously. The City Council set the pace: by 1958 its provisional district scheme reached the gruelling objection stage and became fully operative in 1961, among the very first in New Zealand. Its first five yearly review, commenced in 1968, again led the field in breaking new ground, especially in environmental protection. As to planning on a metropolitan scale, the Council was only indirectly involved after the body concerned, the Auckland Metropolitan Planning Organisation, acquired its own staff in 1949, although two decades on Auckland Regional Authority's first master plan provocatively ventured into what the City Council considered its rightful planning domain.

*** Alleviating the housing shortage**

At war's end slum housing or even homelessness was the lot of many thousands of Aucklanders, and their evoked an inventive practical response -- transit camps utilising unwanted American military buildings located in city parks. By 1948 three complexes were accommodating 3,000. More plentiful housing in the early 1960s led to their phasing out. Another example of the Council's acceptance of broader social obligations was pensioner housing, later restyled housing for the elderly, and even later, housing for senior citizens. Pushed by Roy McElroy, later to be mayor (1965-68), the Council erected four blocks by 1958 and then powered by Government subsidies accelerated the programme, catering in all for some 500 needy citizens. Most dramatic of the housing initiatives was reclamation and renewal of blighted inner-city residential zones. And in Freeman's Bay controversially, because it meant the clearance and demolition of slums and the decanting of their residents into distant and alien state housing areas. This pioneering project was immense and complex, the first new flats not being occupied until 1954, and after twenty years only twenty acres had been reclaimed. Government grants and loans were rarely generous, and views moved away from multi-storey blocks towards town houses. In retrospect

the Council bit off more than it could readily chew, but in the context its motives were wholly worthy.

*** Boosting community effort**

Despite occasional misgivings, ideological rifts and backtracking, the Council progressively extended the frontiers of community development. Where halls were attached to branch libraries, they were quasi-community centres in embryo, but a short-lived drive in the late 1950s to develop fullscale community centres petered out in the face of ratepayer opposition and the advent of television. The Council then switched its efforts to crafting a more modest variation, the community house, the first two appearing at the end of the 1960s in conjunction with the groundbreaking appointment of a community adviser and establishment of citizens' advice bureaux. It was no accident that their siting in areas of high Polynesian and Maori population was accorded the top priority.

*** Confronting mounting metropolitan issues**

Metropolitan problems, shelved because of rabid parochialism or wartime exigencies, could no longer lamely be ignored. Imprisoned within nonsensical boundaries by the intransigent insularity of suburban local bodies which even the revolutionary Local Government Commission area scheme of 1970 could not overcome, the City Council instead sought to exert cooperative leadership in replacing talk with action. In devising workable approaches to major metropolitan issues, the leadership contribution of the City Council -- whether directly or through the Metropolitan Council it created in the 1950s -- was invariably prominent, and often crucial. The formation of political and operational responses to the interwoven barriers to Auckland's progress entail mostly complex stories which preclude anything better than a brief reference, but generally, having being material in shaping both regional policies and institutions, the Council returned without booty to its home-base duties.

*** Crossing the harbour**

In the time between 1929 and 1946 commissions of enquiry on the need for a crossing of the Waitemata Harbour the Council remained unvaryingly lukewarm. However, mayor Sir John Allum then took up the cause so forcefully that by 1950 the Government had been persuaded not only to help fund the harbour bridge but to place its construction and operation under a special purpose authority. Allum was a 'natural' as its inaugural chairman and held that post until well after the road-only bridge opened for traffic in 1960. Rather quaintly, the Council in 1953 envisaged that the bridge would entail 'no special expenditure' on its part.

*** Robbie's sewerage crusade**

Although sewage disposal was the responsibility of a board of local body representatives, the majority came from the City Council and its mayor was usually the chairman, making the relationship extremely close. The Drainage Board hitched itself to a controversial scheme for discharging essentially untreated sewage off Brown's Island, thus precipitating the greatest political cause celebre in Auckland's history. Diehard opposition led by Dove-Myer Robinson twisted and turned to thwart the project, but it was only when control of the City Council changed dramatically following the 1953 local body elections that the policy was overturned. In a compelling irony, Robinson, now a councillor, was not only appointed to the Drainage Board but unanimously elected its chairman. and oversaw early development of the Manukau oxidation ponds.

*** Waiting -- and waiting -- for a train**

On no project of metropolitan benefit did the Council labour longer, if not always consistently, than a modern electric railway system featuring a central city tunnel. First proposed in 1923, the scheme languished until 1950, when it received unqualified endorsement in the Halcrow-Thomas report. Mayor John Luxford (1953-56) championed it until 1955, when the Council, its head turned by the motorway 'solution' to congestion, adopted a Master Transportation Plan resting on a motorway network and relegating an upgraded rail system to the sidelines. However, when the De Leuw Cather report of 1965 rehabilitated the idea of modernised rail transit, the City Council readily endorsed it, but then participated in an unresolvable wrangle over apportioning liability for meeting the then \$42,000,000 capital costs. Robinson, mayor again from 1968, and resolute pro-rail advocate, nearly boiled with frustration.

*** Auckland gets its airport**

More fruitful but scarcely less abbreviated was pursuit of an international airport. By 1938, when the Council got itself gazetted an aviation authority, it had already participated in several searches for suitable sites. Eventually opinion coalesced behind Mangere, and pushed by the City Council the National Government in 1954 agreed to a 50-50 Government-local bodies split in funding the construction and maintenance. Little then transpired until the Council in 1959 initiated the procuring a report from American airport consultants. So armed, the Council herded the other local bodies into a joint management committee, obtained their signatures, and until the Auckland Regional Authority assumed control in 1964, remained the 'party of the second part' in the binding deal with Government.

*** A region needs regional government**

Important as was the Council's role in developing other metropolitan amenities and services such as civil defence, the War Memorial Institute & Museum, and the Museum of Transport & Technology, it was only peripheral to the farseeing creation of truly effective and elective regional government. The genesis of metropolitan control over metropolitan matters was a submission by Clr. Thomas Bloodworth to the 1928 Royal Commission on Transport. Into the 1950s, however, even voluntary cooperation was perfunctory, and the best possible was a spindly plant called the Metropolitan Council. What changed the ground-rules were a powerful series of *Herald* articles extolling regional government and Robinson's masterfully manoeuvring thirty-six local bodies into backing legislation, in the City Council's name, setting up an Establishment Committee charged with drafting a measure to establish an elected regional authority. Despite the cause being boosted by the City Council voluntarily agreeing to transfer its water supply undertaking, it had to survive several years of political diversionary tactics. That even a rather patched regional flag was run up the masthead by Robinson as a fitting inaugural chairman in 1963 can be attributed primarily to the City Council's unswerving commitment.

*** The strains and gains of growth**

In the 1944-71 period the Council was never out of the Citizens & Ratepayers' Association control except for a three year break 1953-56. For all the extraneous inordinate demands made on its energy, concentration, resources and staff -- including a heavyweight battle with the Government and the University in the late 1950s over the latter's permanent siting in a choice central location -- the City Council still managed to improve the quality of its management and service delivery. In 1957 the first Organisation and Methods Officer was appointed, and between 1956 and 1959 the inner workings were critically analysed by an Australian firm of management consultants, probably a New Zealand first. Pressure on office space in the Town Hall forced the gradual dispersion of staff over six locations: they were re-centralised when the

16 storey Civic Administration Building was opened in 1966, a facility matched by the opening of the massive combined works depot several years later.

G.W.A. Bush 5.8.98

Chapter 5 The 1971 centenary: occasion and setting

*** A century is no mean feat**

The marking of the City Council's fiftieth jubilee in 1921 (also the seventieth anniversary of the establishment of the original, ill-fated City Council) had been very constrained, its most permanent, though unattributed, memorial being two solid tomes, *The City of Auckland 1840-1920*, and *Municipal and Official Handbook of the City of Auckland*, respectively written and edited by John Barr, then starting the second decade of his forty year tenure as Chief Librarian. Buoyed up by the prosperous sixties, the Council determined to celebrate its centenary in grand and sustained style. While the events focused on the 'centennial fortnight', a resplendent diversity of occasions were spread over the entire year (1971). Furthermore, they projected out to all Aucklanders, not just the 25% for whom their local body was the Auckland City Council. The trajectory was apt, for a snap survey showed that six out of ten Aucklanders believed the celebrations were to commemorate the founding of the place of Auckland rather than its premier local body.

*** The many faces of celebration**

The masses, special sectors, and the privileged were all remembered. There were a centennial cavalcade (an estimated 250,000 spectators), a mardi gras in Queen Street (30,000 revellers), a fireworks spectacular, and a 'Super Auckland' festival. A fiction contest attracted 154 entries, one in seven of which were reckoned publishable, but the judges in a parallel poetry competition, sponsored by the mayor, Sir Dove-Myer Robinson, reported in obvious embarrassment that not one of the twenty poems submitted was prizeworthy. Another glitch was the belated cancellation of the laying of the foundation stone of the controversial Centennial Hall, although announcement of a competition for designing the Civic (later Aotea) Square was offered in lieu.

Celebratory functions confined to invitees included the (then) regulatory gala civic ball, civic dinner, civic church service, civic garden party, 'Centennial Queen' contest, Women's Day reception, international sporting fixtures, and special racing meeting. With a graceful bow to history, the Council held a special commemorative meeting one hundred years to the day later and on the exact spot where the foundation councillors gathered for their first formal meeting in May 1871. An indefatigable protagonist for Auckland, the mayor found time to prepare and deliver a series of public lectures revolving around the development and future of Auckland.

*** Things that last**

A statue and a book were more enduring products of the centenary. Earlier in his career, Captain William Hobson, the colony's first governor, had been helped by George Eden, Lord Auckland, First Lord of the Admiralty, and in 1840 gratefully bestowed the name of Auckland on his chosen capital. Subsequently, as Governor-General of India, Lord Auckland was the subject for various statues, one of which was eventually donated by the Bengal Government to the City Council. It was officially unveiled by the then Lord Auckland as a centennial centrepiece. Also

`unveiled' was a 637-page commissioned history, *Decently and in Order*, written by Graham Bush, a local government specialist in the University of Auckland's Political Studies Department.

*** The City and the wider metropolis**

Rather extravagantly, the centennial history described the City of Auckland as a `plastic polychromatic mosaic'. For others, its destinies were more prosaically linked to commerce, culture, tourism, or its strategic location as the bridge between New Zealand its immediate world. Because its boundaries were essentially artificial, distinguishing Auckland City from the wider metropolis of Auckland was only of limited value. To be sure, Auckland City's population of 150,000 was essentially static whereas the region's was bounding ahead by 3% per annum, and the City Council faced unique challenges of urban renewal, traffic congestion and the implications of mounting housing density and ethnic concentration, but its and the region's economic fortunes were closely bound together. Apart from the retail water supply, no major utilities remained under the City Council's control and the overall management of rampant growth -- current forecasts were for Auckland reaching 1.25 million people by 1991 -- lay with the oft-troubled Auckland Regional Authority.

Yet the City Council neither could have nor should have `ring-fenced' its territory against the forces and trends impacting on the Auckland region. To some it was particularly vulnerable, but then it also had the greatest contribution to make in their amelioration. It was strategically located astride the isthmus, and within its boundaries were the country's leading port, a fading but still dominant central business district, the principal cultural and educational facilities, and the nexus of motorways and most public transport. And it was not stagnant economically: much heavy industry had departed, but property valuations doubled during the 1960s and by 1971 only isolated minor patches of the 18,500 acres within the City Council's boundaries were still undeveloped.

*** Fortunes and future hitched together**

The Auckland City Council's motto - `Advance!' - was both stark and unequivocal. For the guardians of its interests as it confidently embarked on its second century, the paramount question was whether the thrusting expansion and sprawl of metropolitan Auckland would necessarily result in the City of Auckland advancing. While realising that virtually uncontrollable social and economic forces were shaping Auckland and that `where Auckland goes, so does Auckland City', Robinson, for one, was riven by doubt. With more than one in four New Zealanders living in Auckland and the relentless sharpening of social and economic stratification, it added up to racial tension, resentment of Auckland, and an ominous storehouse of trouble. A City Council alive to the real needs of its citizens would therefore exert itself as much on trying to benignly influence the development of greater Auckland as on effectively servicing its own citizens' needs.

G.W.A. Bush 5.8.98

Chapter 6 Progressing towards abolition (1971-1989)

*** Responses to development and congestion**

Despite the completion of the first reviewed district planning scheme in 1970, the function demanded mounting attention. There were gladiatorial battles over major shopping centres in Remuera and Meadowbank, special studies of three older inner-city suburbs, preparation of a central business district traffic plan (1973), and, from 1974, the second review of the district scheme. Before this became operative in 1981, the 1977 revision of town and country planning legislation compelled the process to be relearnt. Innovations of the mid 1980s were the ordinance prohibiting the unauthorised felling or pruning of certain trees and appointment of a planning commissioner to expedite the handling of minor and uncontentious applications, this enabling completion of the third review, which attracted 2,600 objections and 36,000 counter-objections, just before the 1989 elections at an estimated cost of \$4,000,000.

Though neither a funder, planner, nor provider of public transport, the Council had a key stake in ensuring mobility and combatting congestion. It controlled most roading and traffic, provided most car-parking, operated the Britomart bus terminal and had a vested interest in maintaining the health of the central business district. Furthermore, throughout the seventies the mayor, Sir Dove-Myer Robinson, passionately believed that only a modern rapid rail system could reverse the alarming decline in public transport usage -- 22% of commuters in 1963 forecast to drop to 10% in 2000. To Robbie's dismay a financial commitment by the 1972-75 Labour government was disavowed by its National successor. Thereafter the Council was left to agonize over whether to encourage or discourage car commuting, build more carparking buildings, suspend the Western bus terminal plan while embarking on an ambitious scheme for Britomart which fell with the 1987 stockmarket crash, and belatedly give attention to suburban traffic congestion. The Auckland Regional Authority's 1989 adoption of light rail for the southern and western corridors received the Council's endorsement.

*** In the community's interest**

With few exceptions, the Council's multiplicity of regulatory and service delivery functions became ever more demanding. The 1964 code of by-laws, which contained 3,124 items became steadily less possible to administer: its 243-page replacement came into effect in 1988. Areas high in controversy were restraint of excessive noise, fighting motor vehicle-induced air pollution, fencing of swimming pools, smoking in public places, and dangerous dogs. The exemplary Traffic Department reached new levels of efficiency only to be underhandedly nationalised by the Labour Government in 1989. As regards roading, noteworthy were the construction of Mayoral Drive (1985) and the Upper Queen St link (1987) and removal of the Quay St rail tracks (1989). Traffic calming measures in residential suburban streets became common. Refuse disposal was hard to get right. Multiwall paper bags replaced rubbish bins (1979), the collection service was privatised in 1979, and an overworked compost plant closed in 1986. The Council found the promotion of recycling to be a mixed bag. Notwithstanding the delicensing of domestic meat killing in 1979, the abattoir remained the largest such facility in New Zealand and in 1988 actually purchased a private meatworks in Pukekohe. A long link with history was severed when the Council vacated responsibility for care of the dead: the mortuary was transferred to the Hospital Board in 1979 and Waikumete Cemetery to the Waitakere City Council in 1989.

*** Living by more than bread alone**

Cultural and recreational facilities stayed in an expanding mode. The library skilfully adapted to an electronic world, extended its services to six neighbouring local bodies and celebrated its centenary in 1980 with publication of a splendid history. The art gallery survived a tempestuous decade of administrative upheavals and still managed to mount superb special exhibitions. Its

physical renaissance in the mid 1980s almost doubled the exhibition space. For too long the needs of the ageing Town Hall were lost in the forbidding shadow of the Aotea Centre, but eventually in 1988 the Council bit the bullet and resolved on its massive \$40,000,000 restoration as a dazzling period showpiece. As to parks and reserves, there was always much occurring: indeed, there was even debate as to how many -- 200 to 300 -- parks the Council actually controlled. It added -- the coast-to-coast walkway; the Tahuna Torea nature reserve; the people in parks's programme; the reconstruction of Western Springs Stadium; the MOTAT tramline: it subtracted -- Motuihe and Brown's Island transferred to the Hauraki Gulf Maritime Park Board (1968) and 2,000 hectares of Waitakere Ranges reserves to the Auckland regional Authority (1983); it upgraded -- most notably Western Springs and the zoo; and once it just watched transfixed as the Bastion Point protest erupted in 1977.

*** Approaches to community development**

On balance, the role of developing and sustaining the community took firmer root. The Council appointed New Zealand's first community advisor in 1970 and thereafter a welfare capability was energetically engineered but needed to tread a delicate political path. Urban renewal in Freeman's Bay struggled forward, a token housebuilding role was retained, emergency housing was vigorously promoted (as long as Government subsidies flowed), and by 1984 the pensioner housing stock totalled over 800 units. The community advisory bureaux multiplied and matured so that in 1981 one-sixth of citizens approached them for assistance. Community centres popped up everywhere, by 1986 sixteen providing vibrant focal points for community activity and dynamism. What really made a dramatic difference was entering into the providing of programmes for youth at the youth resource centre, expansion into daycare facilities and programmes for children, and for a decade from 1975, a practical fight to combat unemployment.

*** What is the CBD's real value?**

What had long been happening to the central area gave the Council nightmares. It was very special financially, politically, economically and culturally, yet was steadily being drained of residents, workers, industry, commerce and shops by complex forces mostly beyond the Council's control. Its record in the two decades from 1970 was at best a well-meant but often unsure attempt to stem the adverse tide. At worst it actually dug channels which allowed that tide to advance. To be fair, some potent weapons for shaping the central area's destiny -- the public transport system, control of the harbourside, the snaking motorway network -- were in other hands. So while there was plenty of sophisticated planning and theoretically beneficial ideas, a relationship with practical outcomes was always tenuous. So the Council tried pedestrian malls, saving a few historic buildings but not others, granting development rate relief, expanding carparking space, prettifying Queen Street, and tinkering with the orphan-like Queen Elizabeth II Square. And above all, in 1990 it finally built the Aotea (Cultural) Centre. That, however, was small beer compared to what havoc the frenzied office building boom wrought to downtown Auckland between 1983 and 1987. The answer to the question of whether the City could have 'saved' the central area, let alone creatively sculpted a superior version, depends on one's standpoint.

*** Cheering for itself and Auckland**

The Council became more adept at promoting itself and the City it cradled and it generally reaped a good harvest from its investment in the maintenance of workable relationships with those crossing its path. A press officer's position created in 1977 was soon upgraded to Marketing and Public Affairs Manager. One of the products was a logo -- 'Auckland City,

Caring for You'. Annual reports to ratepayers became chatty and information leaflets abounded. Slow to gather momentum -- little happened for a decade after Los Angeles was embraced in 1972 -- the sister cities' programme leapt forward with the forging of links with Fukuoka (1986), Brisbane (1988) and Guangzhou (1989). In boosting the chosen 'Auckland Alive' image, the Council sponsored an urbanisation conference (1975), the fiesta (1984-87), heavily supported the Auckland Public Relations Office, and finally became a nuclear-free zone (1983). And the City Council, especially the Mayor, Cath Tizard, was instrumental in securing the 1990 Commonwealth Games for Auckland. Another of the friendly faces of Council was as a benefactor: it gave grants and loans (though never funded from rates) to an astounding variety of local endeavours and causes. Its unfriendly face as a rates collector was a prime target during the 'rates rebellion' of 1978-80. Relationships were normally cordial with the Government (although strained over blame for the 1984 Queen St riot), edgy with the Auckland Regional Authority and abrasive with the Auckland Harbour Board when land development was involved. Having established fourteen community committees in 1974, the Council intermittently had misgivings about its offspring causing more trouble than they were worth. Somewhat tied down in the 1980s, they survived.

*** Coping with the Aotea Centre and reorganisation**

From the mid 1980s two topics exercised enormous sway over the Council's strategic agenda: they were the building of the Aotea Centre and the restructuring of the local government system. Understandably, both became preoccupations, but woven around them are such tangled political, financial and psychological webs as to make even a satisfactory summarising impossible. Originally conceived in 1910, resurrected in 1970 as a centennial project, and seemingly destined only to generate reports, the concept of a worthy civic centre crowned by a superb auditorium had repeatedly proven too big to handle. But it also flatly refused to lie down. A frightening obstacle course confronted it -- political opposition from many quarters; Government indifference; an unfavourable poll; dumping of the principal contractor midstream; a 100% cost overrun; and an Audit Office investigation. Rather touchingly, the Aotea Centre was declared finished and ready on the same day that a restructured City Council legally began its existence. And that -- the formal abolition of the City Council founded in 1871 and its merging with eight other isthmus local bodies as the final local act in the revolutionary restructuring of the national local government system in 1989 -- is a watershed history in itself.

G.W.A. Bush 5.8.98

Chapter Seven Writ large: the 'new' City Council from 1990

*** 1989 - a phoenix rising**

With the chronicle still unfolding, many issues still highly political and no written history to signpost the landmarks, the first decade of the 'new' City Council permits but a cautious and impressionistic overview. And in many respects it was a Clayton's transformation, for although population virtually doubled, the term 'takeover' was strictly forbidden and after the inaugural elections ex-suburban politicians appeared at the Council table, the mayor was unchanged (until Dame Catherine Tizard's resignation in 1990 on being appointed Governor-General and replacement by the present incumbent Les Mills), the Citizens & Ratepayers Association stayed comfortably in the box seat, and the majority of senior executives, including Bruce Anderson,

the CEO, were ex-`old' ACC officers. Overall, the massive process of merging nine administrations was accomplished with remarkably little angst.

*** The unstoppable merry-go-round of planning**

In the reformed regime the Council was pitched into the demanding process of annual -- and from 1993 strategic -- planning. This included a substantial component of consultation with both the interested public and the eleven constituent community boards which came in the 1989 reorganisation package. Another such outcome --- a network of area offices giving a community presence -- perished in recentralisation initiatives in 1997. In 1990, the opening of the Aotea Centre was auspiciously highlighted, perhaps partially to distract from a controversial Audit Office report on its financing and the filing of a damages case by the main contractor dismissed in 1988. In relatively short order the Council's portfolio of functions contracted: the Western Springs Stadium and Chamberlain Park golf course were leased to private management (1991) and, more significantly, in 1993 the abattoir business was quite after nearly 120 years' unbroken involvement. A minor offsetting item was entry into kerbside recycling in conjunction with the staggered introduction of the green `wheelie-bins' from 1991, the same year that a less-welcomed change -- the phased city-wide introduction of water meters -- also commenced.

*** Growing stakes in the CBD**

As the mid 1990s approached, central area issues grabbed a growing share of news headlines. It started with the 1992 land-swap with Brierley Investments where the Symonds St tower (and potential casino) site was exchanged for the intended Western bus terminal block. It continued with the remarkable expansion of high-rise apartment blocks, approval for a \$40,000,000 refurbishment of the Town Hall (completed 1997) and a queue of interrelated proposals for developing the harbour edge. The stakes in the latter soared with the vacation and sale of the sprawling railway yards (1994) and the prospect of the America's Cup won in 1995 being defended in Auckland at century's end. Practical property expression of this broad commitment would include acquisition of crucial blocks of commercial property from the Auckland Regional Services Trust, redevelopment of the historic Civic Theatre which reverted to Council ownership in 1996, and purchase of the disused Central Post Office (1995), another of Auckland's few architectural gems. This was matched by a transport dimension, chiefly the Central Isthmus Corridor Study, the contested evolution of an Eastern (motorway) corridor, and, in 1995, the radical recasting of a surface combined-rail terminal at Britomart into a massive underground facility topped by a mixture of restored heritage buildings and futuristic commercial and residential towers.

*** Presiding over progress is never easy**

In some of the recent controversies affecting it the Council has been a direct participant, but in others it has been caught in political and consumer crossfire. Examples of the former have been the sale of pensioner and rental housing stock and the creation and performance of its LATE, Watercare Ltd (1997). In both the great Auckland water shortage (1994) and CBD power crisis (1998), even as a semi-bystander it was questionably targeted by criticism. However, for its major roading project of the decade, the South-Eastern Arterial Highway (opened 1998) it was on the receiving end of only approval.

When a living institution is surveyed, wherever the line is drawn there will be unfinished items on the agenda. For the Auckland City Council in late 1998, these include the final shape of the harbour edge, preparations for both the APEC summit conference and the America's Cup, the outcome of the Britomart scheme, implementation of the central area plan and the adoption of a

modern rapid transit system for Auckland. Irrespective of which do come to fruition, one momentous event that cannot be avoided is the millennium: a future historian should be able to record that the City Council planned and managed its celebration in fitting fashion.

G.W.A. Bush 5.8.98

SELECTED AUCKLAND CITY CHRONOLOGY 1840-1998

- 1840 Possession taken of Auckland as site of capital
- 1842 First local government legislation
First major shiploads of British immigrants arrive
- 1850 First local body elections in Auckland
- 1851 Proclamation of Borough of Auckland (dissolved 1852)
- 1852 New Zealand given Constitution
- 1854 Establishment of Auckland City Council (dissolved 1856)
- 1862 Establishment of City Board of Works
- 1863 First rate ever struck in Auckland
Capital to be shifted to Wellington
- 1865 First gas street lights
- 1866 First piped water supply (from Domain ponds)
- 1871 After petition, Auckland proclaimed a borough (city)
First meeting of City Council
First City Council elections
Establishment of Auckland Harbour Board
City Council takes control of Albert Barracks (Park)
- 1872 First railway train runs in Auckland
- 1875 Western Springs acquired
- 1876 Original Auckland Institute and Museum opened
- 1877 City Abattoir commences operations
- 1880 Public Free Library opens
- 1881 First municipal public baths open
- 1882 City Council area expanded by first amalgamations
- 1883 Auckland University College opened
- 1884 Control of Domain transferred to City Council
Horse trams commence first service (City-Ponsonby)

- 1885 Auckland Hospital & Charitable Aid Board established
- 1886 Original Symonds St cemetery closed and Waikumete opened
- 1887 Queen St first lit by electricity
- 1888 City Art Gallery formally opened
- 1894 First traffic Inspector appointed
First reserves acquired in Waitakere Ranges
- 1901 Venerable Sir John Logan Campbell elected mayor
- 1902 Electric tramways commence running
First water piped from Waitakere reservoirs
- 1903 Cornwall Park, gifted by Campbell, formally opened
- 1904 First 'Greater Auckland' conference
- 1905 Rubbish destructor (incineration) starts working
- 1906 Auckland Fire Board established
Mandatory registration of motor vehicles introduced
- 1908 City Council power station starts generating electricity
- 1910 Grafton Bridge opened to traffic
- 1911 Town Hall completed and opened
- 1912 First major strike of City Council employees
- 1913 Parnell and Arch Hill amalgamated into City
- 1914 Parnell and Tepid Baths receive first patrons
First City Council houses approved
City Council owned Fish Market commences business
- 1915 Myers' Park opened
- 1917 Epsom amalgamated into City.
- 1918 Influenza epidemic strikes
- 1919 City Council purchases electric tramway system
Municipal Choir gives first concert

- 1921 Point Chevalier amalgamated into City
- 1922 First mechanical traffic signals in operation
Auckland Zoological Park opened
Auckland Electric Power Board established
- 1923 Waikumete Cemetery Crematorium in operation
- 1924 Tramways enter `war' with private buses
First large City Council housing estate completed
Municipal Band starts performing
- 1926 First municipal off-street parking constructed
- 1927 Royal Commission on Auckland's water supply
Expansive Civic Centre scheme rejected
- 1928 Royal Commission on Auckland's transport
- 1929 Waterfront (Tamaki) Drive opened for traffic
War memorial Institute & Museum officially opened
Great depression strikes Auckland
- 1930 Royal Commission on harbour crossing
- 1931 Citizens & Ratepayers' Assn first gain political control
- 1933 Conference on combatting unemployment
Municipal motor camp opens at Western Springs
- 1935 Labour Party wins both City Council and general election
- 1937 Municipal bus terminal at Britomart opened
- 1938 City Council town planning scheme first in New Zealand
- 1939 Waitakere scenic Centennial Drive opened
Municipal golf course opened at Chamberlain Park
- 1940 Wartime administrative arrangements introduced
- 1944 Transit housing scheme inaugurated
- 1947 Public relations office founded
First set of automatic traffic lights installed
- 1950 Housing reclamation starts in Freeman's Bay
Auckland venue for Commonwealth Games

- 1952 First block of pensioner flats occupied
- 1953 Parking meters first in operation
- 1954 Construction of Brown's Island drainage scheme started
- 1955 Mangere chosen as site for international air terminal
Master Transportation Plan (motorways) adopted
Water flows from first water reservoir in Hunua Ranges
- 1956 Brown's Island gifted to City Council as park
Motor vehicle testing station opened at Grey Lynn
- 1958 'Barnes' Dance' pedestrian crossing at intersections
- 1959 Auckland Harbour Bridge opened
- 1960 Mangere Drainage scheme commissioned
- 1961 City Council's first planning scheme operative
- 1963 Compost plant officially opened
First meeting of Auckland Regional Authority
- 1964 Auckland Region reaches half million population
- 1966 Auckland International Airport commences operations
Civic Administration Building opened
- 1967 Introduction of towaway zones
- 1968 First pedestrian mall (Vulcan Lane) developed
- 1970 First Citizens' Advice Bureau established at Ponsonby
- 1971 City Council centennial celebrations
Official City Council centennial history published
New Central Library opened
- 1972 Los Angeles adopted as first sister city
- 1973 Kleensaks introduced for domestic refuse collection
- 1974 Central area traffic control system introduced
- 1975 Civic Underground Car Park opened
- 1977 Coast-to-coast walkway developed

- 1979 Aotea Square officially opened
- 1980 Queen Elizabeth II Square opened
MOTAT-Zoo tramway inaugurated
Busking in Queen St permitted
- 1981 Special animal control centre opened
- 1982 First-ever Council meeting outside Civic Chambers
- 1983 Auckland City declared a nuclear-free zone.
- 1984 Queen St riot
Tolls on Harbour Bridge abolished
- 1985 Mayoral Drive formally opened
First area office (Blockhouse Bay) opened
- 1986 Fukuoka adopted as second sister city
First elections conducted by postal vote
First modern elections based on wards
- 1988 Sister-city link established with Brisbane
- 1989 Traffic control taken over by Ministry of transport
Amalgamation with nine suburban municipalities
Reconstitution of `new' Auckland City Council
- 1990 Aotea Centre opened
Auckland 150th anniversary celebrations
Auckland venue for Commonwealth Games
- 1991 *Auckland Star* newspaper ceases publication
- 1992 Auckland Regional Services Trust established
- 1993 Municipal abattoir sold
- 1994 Great Auckland water shortage
- 1995 Commonwealth Heads of Government conference
- 1996 Population of Auckland region exceeds one million
- 1997 Town Hall refurbishment completed
Civic Theatre reverts to City Council
America's Cup village construction started
- 1998

South-Eastern Arterial Highway opened
Britomart development appeal heard

G.W.A. Bush 5.8.98

MAYORS

Auckland Borough Council 1851-52

1851-52 Archibald Clark

Auckland City Council 1854-55

1854-55 Dr. Walter Lee (Chairman)

Auckland City Council 1871-

The first two mayors were appointed by the Council and those thereafter popularly elected.

Until 1915 the mayors' term was annual; for the next twenty years there was a biennial term and from 1935 it was triennial.

1871-74	Philip Philips
1874	Henry Isaacs
1874-75	Frederick Prime
1875-76	Benjamin Tonks
1876-77	William Hurst
1877-78	Henry Brett
1878-80	Thomas Peacock
1880-83	James Clark
1883-86	William Waddel
1883-89	Albert Devore
1889-91	John Upton
1891-93	William Crowther
1893-96	James Holland
1896-97	Abraham Boardman
1897-98	Peter Dignan
1898-1901	David Goldie
1901	Sir John Logan Campbell
1901-03	Alfred Kidd
1903-05	Sir Edwin Mitchelson
1905-09	Sir Arthur Myers
1909-10	Charles Grey
1910-11	Lemuel Bagnall
1911-15	Sir Christopher Parr
1915-25	Sir James Gunson
1925-31	George Baidon
1931-35	George Hutchison
1935-41	Sir Ernest Davis
1941-52	Sir John Allum
1953-56	John Luxford
1956-57	Thomas Ashby
1957-59	Keith Buttle
1959-65	Sir Dove-Myer Robinson
1965-68	Dr. Roy McElroy
1968-80	Sir Dove-Myer Robinson
1980-83	Colin Kay

1983-90 Dame Catherine Tizard
1990- Les Mills

The longest serving mayor was Sir D-M. Robinson (eighteen years), who also has been the only mayor to regain office after being defeated. Dame C. Tizard has been both the first woman mayor and the only Labour Party mayor.

City and metropolitan population 1841-1998

	Auckland City Council Area	Auckland Metropolitan Area
1841	1,835	2,895
1851	1,850	8,761
1861	7,989	13,915
1871	12,937	26,176
1881	16,664 x	32,389
1891	28,613	51,287
1901	38,400	67,226
1911	40,536	102,676
1921	81,712	157,757
1931	105,600	217,000
1941	106,800	223,700
1951	127,406	329,123
1961	143,583	448,365
1971	151,580	698,400
1981	144,963	769,568
1991	315,668 #	855,571
1996	357,400	997,940
1998 (est)	372,600	1,138,300

x Much of the variation between 1881 and 1931 accounted for by successive amalgamations

Figures from 1991 include the 1989 consolidation of nine isthmus cities and boroughs.

Note: Figures from histories of Auckland City Council and estimates based on official sources.

G.W.A. Bush 5.8.98