



BLOCKHOUSE BAY  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
INCORPORATED

# NEWSLETTER

October 2023. Number 115

## NEXT OPPORTUNITY TO GET TOGETHER

In lieu of our usual bi-monthly meeting, we would like to cordially invite you all to join us at ARMANASCO HOUSE where the society will be proudly showing our largest ever photo exhibition entitled: 'Weddings & the Ever Afters' as part of the Auckland Heritage Festival.

As this is happening over the school holidays, children and grandchildren are welcome too. They will have the opportunity to discover stories about the Bay and learn how to make their own origami hearts to take home with them.

Don't miss this exciting opportunity to celebrate the history of love in the Bay. Please refer to the enclosed Heritage festival poster for dates and times.

**BROUGHT TO YOU BY AUCKLAND COUNCIL**  
**AUCKLAND HERITAGE FESTIVAL**  
*Peace, love and protest*  
**23 SEPTEMBER - 8 OCTOBER 2023**

**Weddings & the Ever Afters – Photo Exhibition**  
**Date:** Tuesday 26 Sep & 3 Oct 10am – 2pm  
 Wednesday 27 Sep & 4 Oct 10am – 5pm  
**Location:** Armanasco House on the Village Green  
 576 Blockhouse Bay Road, Blockhouse Bay  
**Entry:** FREE Children's Activity: Origami heart making  
<https://blockhousebayhistoricalsociety.com/>

In collaboration with the Blockhouse Bay Library, the **Blockhouse Bay Historical Society** presents a dual exhibition of wedding images, stories and memorabilia through time. Both venues are located in the Gittos Domain and we encourage everyone to view these complimentary exhibitions in tandem. There will be a wide variety of images across differing eras, many sourced from our local community as well as our extensive archives. Together, we celebrate the history of love in the Bay.

heritagefestival.co.nz  
 aucklandheritage

## MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

While we have been receiving photos celebrating love from many in the community and searching through our archives, it has impressed upon me the type of memories that remain with us long after others have faded. Memories of kindness, love and friendship.

The teacher who encouraged and believed in you, a grandparent who had all the time in the world for you, a friend who stood by you when things were tough, that special someone who loved you - warts and all - and brought out the best in you.

These are the memories we cherish, the memories worth holding on to, the ones that inspire us to do the same for those around us! So that one day, when the next generation of Blockhouse Bay look back on this time, we hope it will be filled with memories of kindness, love & friendship - the backbone of a wonderful community that makes it an awesome place to call home!

Krystene

Chair; Krystene Vickers; krys@ekiwi.com  
 Vice Chair; Tony 626 6445 tony.joyce@xtra.co.nz  
 Secretary; Eileen 627 4416  
 Treasurer; Anne 627 8619

Life Members;  
 Eileen Rusden, Yvonne Dabb, Alan Cole and Brian Goodwin  
 Visit our website; [www.blockhousebayhistoricalsociety.com](http://www.blockhousebayhistoricalsociety.com)

# Weddings and

*A sneak peek at a tiny part of what's in store for you...*



*Bill & Myrtle pictured on their wedding day outside the old St Saviours Church, Blockhouse Bay. Their best man and bridesmaid directly behind them.*

## **Wedding of Wilson (Bill) & Myrtle Frazer 27 June 1942**

### **WWII Wedding in the Bay – by Mavis Jones**

The wedding took place at St. Saviours Church on Saturday 27 June 1942, of Myrtle Jones, eldest daughter of Percy and Mona Jones of Whitney St and Wilson Frazer son of Jim Frazer – late of Margate Rd, by the Rev. John H. Cable. Both the groom, Wilson, and the groom's father, Jim, wore Army uniform. Jim was on temporary staff, Camouflage Department, NZ Army and Wilson was in Army camp at Paihia, Northland.

The little church was full with families of the bride and groom. After the service, they went into Queen Street to the Majestic Arcade, where at the Majestic Tea Rooms we had a small family wedding breakfast. After that we all came back to the Bay, where we had a 'social' at 8pm at the Improvement Hall for all our local friends. Myrtle and Frazer had first met at a dance there.

Myrtle was 21 and Wilson aged 20 (nearly 21) on their wedding day. Sister Betty and brother Bill Jones were bridesmaid and best man. Wilson's stepmother, Mrs Frazer, made the frocks. The bride's frock had a lace yoke. Clothes rationing was in force at the time. The photographs were taken by Peter Pan Studios, Karangahape Road.

# the Ever Afters

## Marriage a little give and take

CL 27/6/08

By Scott Morgan

The war-time wedding of Bill and Myrtle Frazer could hardly be described as conventional.

But the couple, who are celebrating 66 years of marriage today, wouldn't change a thing.

After the cancellation of Myrtle's 21st birthday party after an argument with her father, Myrtle decided she wanted a wedding instead.

The only problem was that Bill, who met Myrtle through his sister, was stationed in Whangarei with the army during World War Two at the time.

"I didn't even know I was getting married!" he says.

"You can't just walk off an army camp site."

Luckily Bill, now 86, managed to organise a few days leave and the pair became husband and wife at St Saviours Church in Blockhouse Bay, before honeymooning in Herne Bay.

Over the next few years the Blockhouse Bay residents didn't see much of each other, with Bill's army and air force postings sending him all over the country.

But that didn't stop a determined Bill from seeing his bride whenever he could, with the most dedicated of his visits including a cycle trip from Whangarei to Auckland.

"You could catch the train but I missed it. I thought I



**Newlyweds:** Bill and Myrtle Frazer on their wedding day on June 27, 1942, at St Saviours Church in Blockhouse Bay.

could catch it at the next station, but it was just swamp," he says. "I got back a day late and spent two days confined to barracks.

"It wasn't the end of the world, we had nowhere to go anyway - on £7 a day you can't buy much beer."

Myrtle, 87, says it wasn't easy with Bill away so much.

But her five sisters, three brothers and dad made it easier on her, even though he was a "firm old fella".

After the war Bill set up a painting and paper-hanging business and built a house in Blockhouse Bay for Myr-



**Still going strong:** Sixty-six years later, Bill and Myrtle celebrate another wedding anniversary today.

Photo: JASON OXENHAM.

tle and their three children, where they still live today.

"We moved in with the roof and the outside walls and floor done," he says.

"Most of the interior walls were put up at night. The kids used to sleep through it

all because they got used to the noise."

In retirement, the pair have been active members of the Avondale RSA and keen bowlers.

As for what's kept them together so long, Myrtle says

there's no real secret to a successful marriage.

"You've just got to have a lot of patience. It's give and take."

Bill also appreciates his wife's skills around the house.

"She's a great cook - it's a lot better than the stuff we got in the services."

Although two of their children died in recent years, the pair have five grandchildren and six great-grandchildren that they see regularly.

One humorous aside, the local lady 'busybodies' loved to gossip and were quite positive that because Myrtle got married with rather short notice, that they 'had' to get married (ie the bride was pregnant). It was with great satisfaction they proved the ladies wrong, as their first child was born 2 years after their marriage!!

Before Rev Cable would marry Myrtle, he insisted she be christened into the Anglican Church. Myrtle had moved with her family to the Bay from the West Coast, where her father was a miner, when she was 14 years old. She and Wilson had been engaged for 12 months when it was time to plan her 21st party. She decided to have a wedding instead and so she sent out invitations to her wedding

instead of a 21st party. She had to write to Wilson, who was in camp, to tell him what she had done! She was the only daughter out of six daughters whom her father agreed to 'give away' at their wedding.

Myrtle was manpowered to work at Brigden's Factory in New North Road, working as a shoe machinist and making Air Force boots. In 1944 after Wilson had changed from the Army into the Air Force, he was stationed at Rongotai, Wellington. As Myrtle wished to join him, she was then manpowered into work at Wellington Slippers sewing on soles.

# Patience key to long union

*West Leader June 2012*

By NICOLA MURPHY

MYRTLE and Bill Frazer didn't think they'd live to celebrate their 70th wedding anniversary.

But that's exactly what they'll be doing on June 27.

The Blockhouse Bay residents are fighting fit, happily married and still living in the home they built 63 years ago.

Their seven-decade union began when the couple married at St Saviours Church in Blockhouse Bay in 1942.

They met at a dance hall through Mr Frazer's sister and got engaged following an argument Mrs Frazer had with her dad after her 21st birthday party was cancelled.

"I just thought, 'blow this, we're going to get married,'" she says.

Mr Frazer, 89, happily obliged. "I didn't have to get down on my knees or anything. She makes the decisions and I agree with her."

But Mrs Frazer says apart from that major decision they have always made their choices together.

After marrying they lived in Howe St in Newton and spent the weekends building a home of their own in Blockhouse Bay.

"We had a shed out the back where we stayed in the meantime and our next-door neighbour hitched us up with some power," Mrs Frazer said.

They spent many happy weekends there during the construction with their two children, Dawn and Jim, and



**Happy union:** Bill Frazer and Myrtle Jones married at St Saviours Church in Blockhouse Bay on June 27, 1942.



**Special milestone:** Bill and Myrtle Frazer say it takes patience to stay married for 70 years.

Photo: NICOLA MURPHY

moved into the house in 1949. A third child, Dianne, came along later.

Mr Frazer fought in World War II and was discharged from the air force in 1945. He worked for Tasman Empire Airways and then started his own painting and paper hanging business which he ran until retiring 10 years ago.

Mr Frazer also enjoyed the occasional visit to the races, where he once won £1200.

"Myrtle didn't believe me when I came home with the

money. She thought someone had lent it to me."

They used it to buy a new piano and a van for Mr Frazer's business.

Community involvement is important to the Frazers and both are life members of the Avondale RSA. Mr Frazer was also a member of Coastguard for many years.

"In 1974 I won the Coastguard award for most meritorious rescue of the year."

While they have led a mostly happy life together there has also been great

tragedy. Two of their children died in 1990.

Their remaining daughter Dawn has organised a party at the Commercial Traveller's Club in Ellerslie to mark her parents' platinum anniversary.

Mrs Frazer turned 91 last Friday but that was a small celebration to save her energy for the big party.

The couple's best man, Bill Jones, and bridesmaid Betty Newman will both be attending.

The Frazers have five

grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren, some of whom are joining them for the celebration.

They say the key to a happy marriage is a lot of patience and a bit of arguing.

"People who say they never argue are lying," Mrs Frazer says.

But they've treated each other well and say it's hard to believe they've been together so long.

"It's never been boring, put it that way," Mr Frazer says.

## Wedding of Victor Armanasco & Edith O'Brien

Victor married Edith O'Brien, a near neighbour and friend in 1950. The kitchen and bathroom we see at the rear of the house today now known as Armanasco House, is what he built for his new bride. The bay window into the main room we think was added at this time too, as this wall faced north on their original section and would have captured all day sunlight.

Victor and Edith lived in the original home right up until his death in 1987. So even though they married later in life, they enjoyed 37 years together. The two of them cultivated a beautiful garden, seen here in this photo taken by Victor using a piece of string to operate the camera – possibly the world's very first selfie? He was remembered mostly for his quiet, unassuming manner, as well as his meticulous excellence in his chosen field of carpentry and cabinet making. More than half his life was devoted to building Catholic churches, schools and convents throughout Auckland. He was responsible for the planning and construction of major building projects in Owairaka, Avondale, Blockhouse Bay, Glen Innes, Mt Wellington, Onehunga, Panmure and other parishes. A dedicated builder, he put all his skill and craftsmanship into his work, directing and inspiring others with his own enthusiasm.

*Edith (Edy) and Victor (Vic) pictured in their beautiful garden. You may recognise the Blockhouse Bay Medical Centre behind them. This shows the original location of their home, across the road from our current Community Centre.*



*Edith (Edy) and Victor (Vic) pictured leaving St Dominic's Church on their wedding day.*

