

Patrons

1918-1924	Mayors P.J. Luke and R.A. Wright
1925-1926	Mayor C.J. Norwood
1927-1930	Mayor G.A. Troup
1931	Mayor T.C.A. Hislop
1932-1935	J.T. Grose
1936-1938	A. Parlane
1939	P.J. Townley
1940	G. Cooper
1941-1942	R.G. MacMorran
1946-1948	G.P. Shepherd
1949-1963	O.C. Mazengarb
1964-1972	Tom Seddon
1972-1976	W.H. Wilson
1977-1979	Tom Coveney
1979	Mary Seddon
1985-1994	Stan Reid

Presidents

1918-1921	E.W. Wiffen
1921-1922	J.J. Connor
1923	D. Milligan
1924	Dr E. Marchant
1925-1927	M. Simpson
1928-1933	Herbert Baillie
1934-1949	Tom Seddon
1951-1959	W.H. Wilson
1959-1960	E.D. McCabe
1960-1961-	W.H. Wilson
1961-1963	P.M. Williams
1964	W.H. Wilson
1965-1969	Tom Coveney
1970-1979	Peter Fabian
1980-1984	Phil Bothamley
1985-1990	Doreen Green
1991-1995	Bethney McLennan
1995-2005	Mary Stevens
2005-	Letizia Columbano-Green

OBJECTS OF THE SOCIETY

- To promote and share a knowledge of gardens and gardening.
- To promote excellence in flowers, fruit and vegetables through judged competition.
- To co-operate in community projects with other groups or organisations with similar interests and objectives.
- To encourage in children an interest in gardening.
- To enhance the environment of the Wadestown, Wilton and Highland Park districts.

*This history was originally compiled by Betty McFadgen,
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2009.*

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A History of the Wadestown Wilton Horticultural Society Incorporated

1918 - 2009

A History of the Society

Wadestown is a district with special problems for gardeners. 368 metres above sea level, high on a rocky windswept ledge with acid soil, it needed a society to help residents to develop flourishing gardens in beautiful surroundings.

On May 28, 1918, the inaugural annual general meeting of the *Wadestown Cottage Garden and Beautifying Society* was held in St Luke's school room.

The President was E.W. Wiffin, Secretary W.I.J. Blyth and treasurer E.A. Cook. Committee members were A.J. George, H. Beauchamp, S. Brice, C.R. Smith, H.S. Hislop, S.G. Nathan, G.B. Bullock, E.C. Alderson, A. Parlane, T.J. Halse, J.E. Evans, J.E. Bass, C.B. Trimmell and C. Dormer. Ladies Committee members were E.J. Wiffen, Grace Neill, A.A. Gregory, S.H. Watkins, P. McLeod and E. Best.

Three main shows were held during those early years, open to the public, who saw what could be grown, and joined the society to learn more.

Monthly meetings were held, except in winter, and a guest speaker would often attract audiences of 70-100 members. Prizes were given for the best kept flower and vegetable gardens.

To celebrate the first shipment of apples to the United Kingdom, the Department of Agriculture offered to provide apple trees to members on which they could demonstrate how to care for the trees and to prune them. The same year, the society helped families of local men serving overseas in World War 1 by maintaining their gardens.

The November monthly meeting and December summer show were not held in 1918 because the influenza epidemic forced the closure of all societies.

The 1920s

By 1920, the Society became recognized as the local Horticultural Society. The membership was increased with the development of sections from the former Rhodes family estate in Highland Park.. Soon silver trophies began to be presented by members and allocated for annual challenge.

In 1921 the Council agreed to build a rock garden at the tramway terminus if the Society would agree to keep it in order. This was done and some of the rocks remain at the parking area at the junction of Weld St and Wadestown Rd.

As a group the members would order lime from the works in Hawkes Bay; 8 tons was ordered in 1922. This practice continued for many years.

Lowes Gully/Philip Myers Park

The Society was active in planting trees and shrubs and requests to the City Council for 200 shrubs at a time are noted in the minutes. Of concern was the area between Wadestown Rd and Moorhouse St known as Lowes Gully and mention is often made of the rubbish gorse and weeds in letters to the Council.

In 1926 a letter was sent urging the City to purchase the land for a reserve which was eventually done, also in 1926 two Society members were appointed honorary rangers in response to a request from the City Council for help in stopping the vandalism of shrubs and trees in the city and suburbs.

Since 2005, the Society has again turned its attention to this area, now known as Philip Myers Park.. Numerous trucks of rubbish have been removed and shrubs and trees have been planted and tended by the Society.

The 1930s

The Depression of the 30s prompted the Society to offer to provide seed and fertilizer for work schemes for the unemployed as proposed by the inter-church groups, and to advise the City Council on beautification projects for the suburb.

In 1931 a donation of five pounds was made to the Napier earthquake fund.

During this time the Society ran two major shows and 8 meeting/shows. Most meetings reported attendances of over 30 members. There was keen competition for points for annual prizes such as cake stands, a Moorcraft vase or an attaché case. The school children were encouraged to enter shows and on one occasion in 1935 Wilton's Bush had to be declared out-of-bounds to over enthusiastic collectors.

Card games of 500 were held and the minutes of May 1935 record that they were held every Tuesday.

The 2nd World War years

Society members supported the National Flower Show at the Centennial Exhibition in January 1940.

The Annual report of 1941 expressed pride in the members who were in the Armed Forces. The Wadestown Patriotic Society fund was augmented by money from the auction at one meeting of a prize pumpkin: and at another, a display of prize gladioli blooms. Members were successful at the Wellington *Dig for Victory* Show. Arbour Day was supported enthusiastically with plantings of kowhais along Wilton Rd in 1941, and 200 trees in 1942.

Meetings were well attended with 200 at one 1940 evening meeting, though in 1941 one October meeting was cancelled due to torrential rain, floods and slips.

At the AGM of 1942 evening meetings were cancelled so that members could have time for other patriotic endeavors.

In 1948—49 the society had over 200 members though too few were available to serve on the Committee, which led to the cessation of activities for two years.

A Fresh Start, 1950s - 70s

On September 4, 1951 a Special General Meeting was held and the name of the Society was changed to the *Wadestown, Highland Park and Wilton Horticultural Society*.

In the mid 1950s the Society stopped display evenings and concentrated on three shows a year which were held on Wednesdays.

Annual Reports constantly commented on the keenness of the children due to encouragement from their school.

The pattern of three shows a year, spring, summer and autumn continued for some 35 years and heavy show trestle tables made by members were stored under the St Luke's Hall stage and erected with the help of scouts for each show. Raffles were held of donated items, such as a fowl.

In 1979 the show date was changed from a week day to a Saturday, to enable more adults to attend.

The 1980s-90s

The standard of exhibits at shows was raised considerably in the early eighties. New housing in Wilton brought more members.

There was a shortage of vases and trophies which was solved when handsome show vases and silver trophies were inherited from the defunct Wellington, Kelburn and Karori Horticultural Societies.

A gradual increase in the number of female gardeners was taking place too, unnoticed until the exclusively male vegetable grower's challenge trophy was won by Mrs Betty Porritt.

By the mid eighties the work load for three shows a year fell on too few shoulders. Members were surveyed and shows were reduced to the Camelia show and a Summer Show in February, plus monthly meetings.

The best white camellia at the Camellia Show still receives a painting of white camellias painted by local artist Beatrice Seddon, wife of Tom Seddon, Patron in the 1960s.

At the AGM in December 1994 the Society was incorporated and the name changed to *Wadestown Wilton Horticultural Society Incorporated*.

In the late 90s pea straw and Nitrophoska Blue fertilizer were ordered in bulk and sold to members and the society continued to flourish.

Anniversaries

In 1968 the Society celebrated its *50th anniversary* by erecting a seat near the entrance to the Otari Plant Museum. It was unveiled by Mrs Maz-engarb, Vice President. At a Jubilee meeting the minutes recording the gift of apple trees in 1918 was read, and a silver cup which had been won outright in 1918,

was returned to the Society by the recipient's daughter.

In 1988-89 the *70th anniversary* celebration was marked with historically themed meetings and visits to local gardens.

In 1993 to celebrate the *75th anniversary* and in memory of patron and members Stan and Jean Reid, two seats were erected outside the Wadestown Library. For several years Stan had supplied named specimens of native trees and plants for the Library to exhibit, and in the 80s he warned about the invasion of Old Man's Beard into native bush.

In 1998 the *80th anniversary* was celebrated with a special meeting. Three elderly Wadestown identities, Mr. Jack Withers, Dr Isobel Maurice and Mrs Joyce Ross reminisced about old times in Wadestown.. The society also cleared the area at the old bus terminal (where the rocks remain from the voluntary work done in 1921) and has been tidying the area since that time.

The Society today

The Society has met in St Luke's Hall since its inception except when St Luke's was building its new Centre and the Summer Show was convened at Malvina Major Retirement Village.

In the last few years the Society has transformed the area now known as Philip Myers Park . The council has supplied trees and the Society helped by other volunteers has beautified a large area on the Wadestown Road side of the grass.

The Society now holds an annual Garden Show in February, takes part in the Wadestown Community Fair , has evening camellia, rose and spring shows, an annual bus trip to gardens out of Wellington and a Christmas supper.

Monthly meetings continue with many interesting speakers providing encouragement and education on how to meet the challenges of gardening in Wadestown and other parts of Wellington.