

Tawa History Group

Leader: **Bruce Murray**

Co-ordinator: **Gil**

The Tawa History Group has had two excellent and well attended meetings this year. Bruce is a fantastic story teller, regaling us with numerous tales about the people, places and events that have all shaped Tawa. For anyone who thought history was dull at school, then listening to Bruce will soon change your mind!



Nott House

This story told by Bruce is about Nott House, a 19th century settler's cottage, on Rowell Road, Glenside and Max Dorset. It's a story about murder and reputed nudity – with an added update about Moa bones and Nott House's future.

The Story of Max Dorset and Nott House

Take a look to your left when driving from Tawa to Johnsonville on the backroad and you will see Nott House, the oldest surviving, but now derelict building in the Wellington area. William Nott, a farm labourer, and his wife Ann had emigrated from Britain in 1842, bought land two years later at Half Way, now known as Glenside and later, with his second wife, built the house around 1860.

One colourful character, Max Dorset, who later owned the house was known to enjoy sitting naked on the veranda despite trains passing by just a few metres from his home. May 1956 saw Dorset in court defending a murder charge. According to his lawyer Bill Sheat, Dorset shot his wife's lover, George Grandison, as the adulterous couple tried to leave the farm. Witnesses described him running to their car and firing three shots through the window before the car crashed into a telegraph pole and Grandison died soon after.

"They were about to go off together - it had reached that stage," said Sheat. "Dorset had been aware it was going on for some time . . . they were a bit blatant about the whole thing."

Dorset faced murder charges but was eventually found guilty of manslaughter. A pitiful figure, he was sentenced to just one year in prison.

Full Story: <https://www.wellingtoncityheritage.org.nz/buildings/151-300/211-nott-house-and-milk-stand-adjacent-to-middleton-road>

Update: After Max Dorset's death in 2013, Nott House and 22 acres of land were sold. The latest owners of Nott House have submitted a resource consent application to subdivide the land for housing development. As a heritage listed building a thorough assessment of the site (see link below for full report) was required during which Moa bones were found dating to the fourteenth century and history revealed that various Māori tribes had at times cultivated patches in the area as it was part of the original overland track to Porirua and the West Coast. The conclusion of the report was that the owner needed to apply to Heritage New Zealand for final archaeological authority before commencing work.

Full Story:

http://www.glenside.org.nz/images/stories/heritage/400_Middleton_Road_assessment_FINAL.pdf