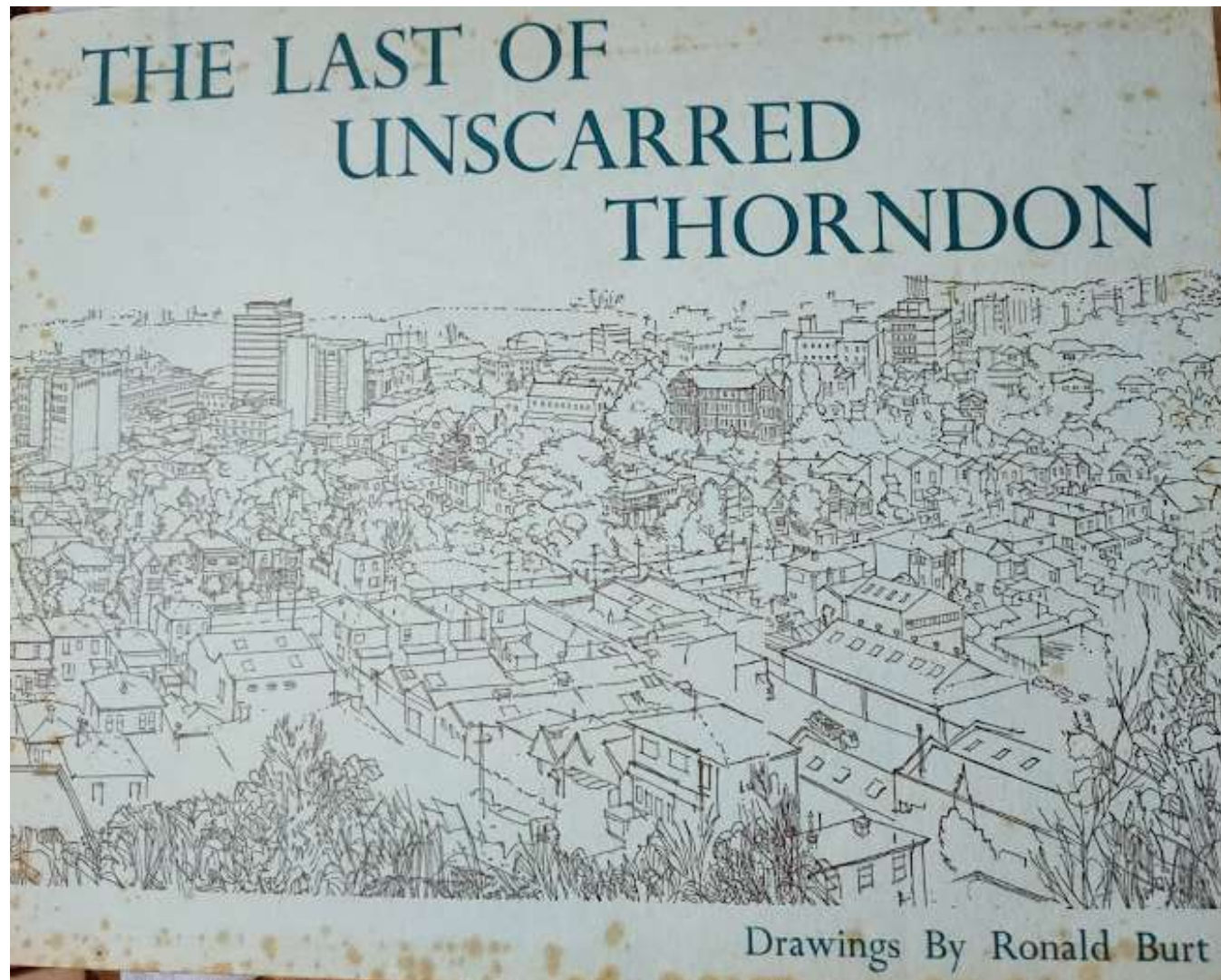


The Last of Unscarred Thorndon – drawings by Ronald Burt



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FOREWORD

Thorndon is the cradle of Wellington. It is also deeply involved in the history of New Zealand. Four generations of New Zealand's legislators have lived in its colonial mansions. More humble but just as vital toilers have lived in its tiny cottages and quaint little streets.

Whatever their station, Thorndon's inhabitants were colourful and still are, for that matter. And the same could be said for its pubs. Which of them was it in which Thomas Bracken wrote "Not Understood"? Possibly a few lines in each one of them.

The brewing of beer has always been in the Thorndon air. So, since the 1860s, has the smoke from the railway yards. Victorian sin was scarlet there too, in a street of "houses", Fraser's Lane, which used to run off Sydney Street East.

Thorndon also had its spiritual side—Bishopscourt, Old St. Paul's, The Basilica, Thorndon Methodist Church—all were very much part of their environs.

Thousands of women have affectionate memories of Thorndon. Every day from all over the city and suburbs they have come, over the years, to attend one of the three large secondary schools all within a quarter-of-a-mile. Four generations of girls have wrinkled their dainty noses at the smell from the brewery and complained about the smuts from railway locomotives on their clean uniforms, and wandered home through the byways and odd little streets.

Today old Thorndonians wonder how their microcosm of New Zealand's past will survive the great wounding gash of a new motorway.

It was when it became clear that the battle against the motorway had been lost that the Northern Sentinel, the area's monthly newspaper, and Tinakori Road resident, artist Ronald Burt, got together to ensure that there was a permanent record which would hold not only the formal outline, but the very atmosphere of old Thorndon for all time.

This series of drawings has run in every issue of the Northern Sentinel now for two years. Originally it was intended that the record should be of houses which fell before the motorway bulldozers. As things worked out, sometimes a house marked for destruction was reprieved by a change in the engineers' plans. But by and large, the motorway has been sweeping all history away from its path.

This volume re-publishes Mr. Burt's drawings in a more durable form than a newspaper, so that individual drawings can be removed and framed. It is not possible for everyone to see the originals. Some have been purchased by the families owning the properties concerned, although many are now in the hands of the Turnbull Library, presented to it by Mr. Burt.

Research for the text accompanying the pictures in this volume has been by Clemency Bryant, Robin Ormerod, and, in the case of the Marist Brothers' School, by Patricia Delaney. They would like to thank the various Thorndon residents and others for their willing help and co-operation in this enterprise.—D.S.B.