

Newsletter

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FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Mid-Winter Talk on HPT Register
Thursday 11th July 7.30 pm - School of Architecture

AGM
Thursday 12th September 5.30 pm
Museum of the City and Sea

US Marines Hall, Titahi Bay

Historic Places Wellington is opposing an application by Porirua City Council for resource consent to demolish this building. The City Council is the building's owner.



Former US Marines Hall, Titahi Bay

The building, which has in recent decades been used by the Porirua Little Theatre, was constructed in 1942-43, during World War 2, as a recreation hall for the U.S. Marines stationed at the Titahi Bay Camp. Eight camps were established along the West Coast of the Wellington region during that time either using buildings already in existence (such as the old golf club house at Titahi Bay) or constructing purpose built facilities within very tight time frames. Since the war these buildings have gradually been demolished and now the hall at Titahi Bay is the only purpose built structure still in existence from these eight camps and still in its original location.

After the war the hall became an important community venue used for a wide variety of activities and a range of organisations among which the Porirua Little Theatre has been the most lasting and major tenant.

In historical terms, the association with the US Marines is the building's most significant quality. It directly illustrates New Zealand's role in the Pacific war and our modern association with the United States which began at that time. This wartime association still resonates strongly today, as shown by the strong community interest and participation in last year's 70th anniversary celebrations of the Marines' arrival.

The hall is a plain and utilitarian structure, but this in no way detracts from its significance. This has been recognised by the City Council, which has included it in Group B (Buildings of Regional or Local Significance) in the District Plan. Unfortunately the recent history of the building is a sorry story, and the blame has to be laid mainly with the Porirua City Council. Maintenance has been neglected and what work has been done has actually added to problems instead of fixing them. Materials used in the original construction, being wartime, were not of the best standard, and subsequent neglect has made matters much worse.

There is considerable community concern and support for keeping this piece of World War 2 history. Historic Places Wellington is asking the Council to defer its application until interested parties have been fully consulted, and properly costed options for repairing and retaining of the building have been prepared.

Harcourts Building

The battle to save Harcourts (former T&G) building on Lambton Quay continues (See our Newsletter 3). As expected, the owner has appealed against the decision not to allow demolition. The owner has declined mediation, so the case will proceed to a hearing by the Environment Court. No date has yet been set down for this.

Historic Places Wellington has joined the proceedings as a party opposing the appeal. These parties (New Zealand Historic Places Trust, Historic Places Wellington, Civic Trust and one individual submitter) will discuss how best to co-operate in preparing a case and sharing resources.

Heritage New Zealand Bill

Our submissions on this Bill (See Newsletter 3 for details) have been presented by committee members to the Local Government and Environment Select Committee of Parliament. We received an attentive hearing.

The Committee received a large number of submissions, and is due to report back to Parliament by 26 June. At a recent talk the Minister of Arts, Culture and Heritage, the **Hon Christopher Finlayson**, expressed his expectation that the bill's final passage should be concluded quite speedily thereafter.

Petone Plan Change

Historic Places Wellington has presented a submission opposing proposed changes to zoning in the Petone retail area (See Newsletter 3 for details). Hutt City Council's proposals were opposed by a large number of Petone groups and individuals. From a heritage point of view, the proposals are potentially damaging to the Jackson Street heritage retail area, as they would open up new areas for small retail use and undermine the viability of the older retail area.

Indications from the hearings, which were before Commissioners, are positive. Hutt City Council officers presented a report to the Commissioners proposing a large number of changes to the council's proposals. These would modify the proposals in ways largely acceptable to objectors and Historic Places Wellington. The Commissioners are still considering the submissions and reports, and will give their decision later. We are hopeful of a positive outcome for heritage and community aspirations.

Recent HPT Registrations

The Historic Places Trust has in the past year initiated a project to resolve technical deficiencies in the registration process of 44 places previously thought to have been registered in the Wellington City Council area. (There are deficient registrations elsewhere in New Zealand but these are the only ones being targeted at present in our region.) Now that all 44 places have been researched and assessed afresh, members may be interested to have a summary of the project at this date.

One property was found to have a valid registration. Nine have been through the full process and the HPT Board has approved their registration. In one case, that of Crofton, the registration was changed from Category 2 to 1, a move which we had recommended. **Crofton**, a two-storied house in Kenya St, Ngaio, was built in 1857 by **William Fox** who subsequently became Premier of New Zealand. Thus this house has significance both because of its connection to Fox and because it is one of the oldest surviving houses in Wellington and a relatively rare remaining example in the country of a house dating from the 1850s. **We are planning a visit to Crofton later in the year.**

Three registrations are still in the consultation process, including a complex one encompassing the wharf area from **Pipitea Wharf** and **Shed 35** in the north to **Clyde Quay Wharf**. In 24 cases the investigation has been completed and they have been identified as good candidates for registration; they have been given “Proposal” status on the Register and will be progressed in future as resources allow. Finally there are seven where the investigation has been discontinued as it is considered that their heritage values are sufficiently recognised either through inclusion in Historic Area registrations or through the District Plan listing. It is worth remembering that legal protection is not given through the HPT Register listing but through inclusion in the District Plan.

In addition to the deficient registrations, there has been one new registration approved, the **Albion Gold Mining Company Battery and Mine Remains, at Terawhiti Station on the South Makara Road**. At various times in the 19th Century this area was a site for gold prospecting, though without viable results. The Albion Company was one of many companies working there and its remains from the 1880s include the battery equipment, the mine entrance and the tramway cutting. As this is on private land, it cannot be visited without permission.

Deficient HPT Registrations Which Have Been Approved



Holy Trinity Church, Ohariu Valley
Deficient registration now resolved.
Category 2



**Former Sexton's Cottage
Bolton St Cemetery**
Deficient registration now resolved.
Category 1

Earthquake Engineers Conference

The **New Zealand Society of Earthquake Engineers** held their biennial conference at the end of April in Wellington, entitled “Same Risks, New Realities”. It was very well-attended by many engineers, academics, heritage architects and lay people interested in our building stock, including several key-note speakers from Italy and the USA who have considerable experience in improving buildings’ potential performance in earthquakes.

The Sunday session focussed on heritage matters and featured a large number of real-world analyses of our heritage building stock by local structural engineers seeking to marry commercial imperatives with the knowledge of behaviour of buildings in seismic events. Speakers included **Bruce Chapman** from HPT and **Alistair Aburn**, **Chief Commissioner** for the recent hearings on the Harcourts Building, who reiterated the findings of that report.

Tour of Heritage Office Buildings



Maurice Clark outside Stout Street Building

About 50 members turned out for this tour of two buildings designed in the 1930s by **John T. Mair**, the Government Architect at that time. We were fortunate to be guided by the owner and developer, **Maurice Clark**, whose personal comments on the structures and the restoration work made the tour a particularly interesting one.

The 1939 Stout St **Departmental Building** is in the process of renovation described by Maurice as “adaptive reuse”. The building has a concrete-encased steel frame which is part riveted and part welded. Testing has shown this to be very strong, so much so that testing suggests the building meets well over 100% of the current building code. This is remarkable for a building of that era. Outside the refurbishment is taking the building back to its original look. Inside Maurice noted there were few areas of historic interest apart from the window shapes and a spectacular staircase threading through all floors. The ground floor will in this reincarnation be more open and will show off the Hanmer marble interior and Coromandel granite exterior.

Tucked against this building and facing onto Maginnity Street is the **Wellesley Club**, a charming 1920s building with Category 1 status but now on the WCC earthquake-prone list. Because of his interest in heritage buildings, Maurice has agreed to “tie” the club to the stronger departmental building during the restoration process, an exercise he likened to “gripping a soft cheese” but one that will save the building.



Members inside the Stout Street Building



The Wellesley Club Building

The **Tower Building** which occupies most of the block bounded by Brandon St, Customhouse Quay and Panama St replaced an earlier brick gothic-style building which was demolished shortly after the Napier earthquake of 1931. In that post-earthquake period, the replacement building was designed with structural elements foremost, but does have some attractive art deco elements which have been enhanced by the recent renovations. Here again the challenge has been to incorporate modern requirements of heating and fire prevention without compromising the heritage advantages of the high ceilings and interesting window shapes. The two original and attractive staircases are still in use and members were interested to see also the stained glass windows from the earlier building.



Maurice Clark in his 1923 Studebaker outside the Tower Building

Visit to Former Fever Hospital



Front Entrance of the Former Fever Hospital - At the Start of the Tour

The former Fever Hospital on Mount Victoria is being strengthened and refurbished for future use by the SPCA. The building, with a Category 2 listing, has an important and interesting, if somewhat sad, history as an isolation hospital for patients with infectious and contagious diseases. It was built in 1918-19 and is a very good example of the then prevailing Arts and Crafts style. It later had a number of short-lived uses and then became semi-derelict.

The SPCA has secured a tenancy of the building from the Council as owner and is working towards

setting up a comprehensive animal care facility. Structural strengthening has been completed by the Council and work has begun on the new fit-out. Of the two lovely old wings, one will be for animal admissions and veterinary work including an operating theatre, while the other one will be used for education and outreach. This is an excellent example of reusing an important heritage building for a new and exciting purpose.

On 21 April staff and volunteers guided a group of 38 HPW members on a tour of the building. Members were impressed by the SPCA's vision and energy. The series of public tours have been greatly appreciated and support has been shown by a good flow of donations for the project.

Forthcoming Events

Mid-Winter Talk on HPT Register

For winter, instead of a tour we have organised an indoor event which will be a talk on the HPT Registration process, illustrated by listed buildings within the Wellington region. This will be given by **Ann Neill**, General Manager Central Region Office, and **Blyss Wagstaff**, Heritage Adviser - Registration. It will be held on Thursday 11 July at 7.30pm at the **School of Architecture in Vivian St.** (Opposite Marion Street).

AGM at the Museum of City and Sea

This will be held on Thursday 12 September, starting at 5.30pm and followed by a talk from the Director of the Museum, **Brett Mason**. Further details will be in our next newsletter but note your diaries now.

Membership Arrangements

Because our organisation started a year ago, many members will be receiving **reminders of renewal** from Historic Places Aotearoa who handle our membership lists. We look forward to your renewals and hope you will encourage your friends to join also as this will strengthen our ability to advocate for heritage. We are still working on our application for charitable status, so unfortunately donations at this stage do not qualify for tax reductions.

Our **quarterly newsletter** goes to all members, by email to most and by post to those who do not use email. Communications at intervals between newsletters (such as reminders of tours or urgent heritage news) are sent by email only. We regret that time and finance limit our ability to post more often than quarterly to those with postal addresses only, but where there is a change of date for tours we try to contact those not on email by telephone. As our emails are sent out in batches, make sure that your spam settings do not automatically reject an email with multiple recipients.

Please feel free to share items in this newsletter with friends or contact groups, though in most instances our tours are limited to members only. To suggest items or for feedback on our material, contact us on **wgtn@historicplacesaotearoa.org.nz**