

NEWSLETTER

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CONTACT US

Our email address is wgtn@historicplacesaotearoa.org.nz

EVENTS (See page 5 for details)

Talk - A Tour of Architectural Photography
10 July 7 pm – Free Admission

Workshop on Photographing Historic Buildings
20 July 1 pm to 4 pm Cost \$30

Life in Rural New Zealand Films
18 June 5.30 pm Cost \$20

Heritage New Zealand

Most members will be aware that in early April **Historic Places Trust** changed its name to **Heritage New Zealand**; the Maori name Pouhere Taonga remains the same. This was in advance of the enabling legislation which had its final reading in Parliament on 13 May and has now come into effect as Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Act 2014. The governance changes under this act include replacement of the board by one appointed solely by the Minister and abolition of the HPT branches. This reflects its status as a Crown owned entity but unusually the membership system remains. We hope that the new name will mean there is less confusion about our organisation's status and purpose. We shall report on the implementation of other changes under the Act as they occur.

Harcourts Building – A solution in sight?

While the seemingly never-ending series of legal moves over the future of Harcourts building grind relentlessly on, recent media reports indicate that a solution may be working out behind the scenes. In Newsletter 6 last November we reported that the owners had appealed to the **High Court** against the decision of the **Environment Court** that the refusal of consent to demolish the building should be upheld. The High Court has found that the Environment Court had not properly considered the issues in all respects. The case has been referred back to the Environment Court for rehearing, and the Court must reconsider the question of demolition only if there is no reasonable alternative to demolition, and also the risk to public safety in surrounding buildings if the building remains as it is. Meanwhile, a recent report in the Dominion Post has described negotiations between owner **Mark Dunajtschik** and the government aimed at his strengthening the building which would then be leased to the Ministry of Culture and Heritage, Heritage New Zealand and other agencies. The report stated that negotiations were proving difficult and had not yet reached finality. Such an arrangement would of course be a great solution for the building and many people will be hoping for a successful outcome.

Those of you who subscribe to the National Business Review might wish to refer to the very frank piece by **Sir Bob Jones** on 1 April where he explains why he has no sympathy for the owner, Mark Dunajtschik in respect of the Harcourts Building and believes Mr Dunajtschik should just accept the situation is of his own making and get on with restoring the building.

Hutt City Civic Centre

Since our February newsletter, a lot of work has been done by organisations as well as by local residents to keep the community informed, to encourage people to make their views known and to save from demolition the unique Modernist style Town Hall and if possible the Horticultural Hall too. Historic Places Wellington and NZ Historic Places Trust (now Heritage NZ) have met several times with Hutt City Councillors and with their project team of engineers and architects. A professional group, **Hutt Architects in Small Practice**, has also met with the Council project team and has put a great deal of constructive work into presenting drawings and plans for ways to use the existing halls.



Another strong local community group that has sprung up, **Heart of the Hutt**, also has architectural expertise and has prepared alternative plans for strengthening and modifying the halls for future use. They have mobilised public opinion with several well attended and lively public meetings and events, such as candlelight vigils.

Their latest flyer, an example of the verve and flair of their campaign to **Save the Halls** is illustrated here.

Heart of the Hutt has presented to the Council a petition to Save the Halls, with over 2000 signatures. This group has also researched and published a 103 page **Critical Analysis of the Decision to Demolish the Lower Hutt Town and Horticultural Halls**.

Now **Hutt City Council** has included in its **Draft Annual Plan** their proposal

to demolish the halls, along with an alternative which they claim would cost more, and would save the **Town Hall** but not the **Horticultural Hall**. Submissions to the Council have now closed and all these groups will be speaking to Council at the Hearing to be held in late May.

Heritage and Earthquake-prone Buildings

A Bill before Parliament amends the Building Act to introduce a new regime for earthquake-prone buildings. These buildings fall below 33 per cent of the current building code. The main intent of the Bill is to require such buildings to be brought up to a level above 33 per cent over a twenty year period. There is provision for a ten year extension of the deadline for Category 1 registered buildings.

Historic Places Wellington prepared submissions on the Bill, which were incorporated into a submission by our national body **Historic Places Aotearoa**. We are, in general, supportive of the Bill, which seeks to protect the safety of people whilst at the same time recognising the need to preserve New Zealand's heritage. However, HPA submitted that the extended deadline for completing seismic work should apply to both Category 1 and Category 2 heritage buildings.

There are approximately 15,000 - 20,000 buildings that are potentially earthquake prone. The heritage buildings currently registered either as category 1 or category 2 heritage buildings represent a very small proportion of that total. However, the loss of such buildings, if heritage building owners are not given some ability to manage the costs of earthquake strengthening, would represent a significant permanent alteration of our city and townscapes to the detriment of our cultural identity.

The full submission and other information on the Bill can be found at http://www.parliament.nz/en-nz/pb/legislation/bills/00DBHOH_BILL12960_1/building-earthquake-prone-buildings-amendment-bill

Submission on Wellington's Botanic Gardens

The **Wellington City Council** is calling for submissions on its draft **Management Plan** for the four **Botanic Gardens**, comprising the main **Botanic Garden**, **Otari-Wilton's Bush**, **Bolton Street Memorial Park** and **Truby King Park**. All are listed as Heritage Areas in the Wellington City District plan, two are areas registered with **Heritage New Zealand** and three of the four contain a number of registered heritage buildings. HPW is therefore drafting a submission on this plan, supporting it in general but commenting on some specific heritage policies. Hearings on the Plan will be in August. One change, supported by HPW, is for the Bolton Street Memorial Park to revert to its previous name of Bolton Street Cemetery.

Public Trust Building

The old Public Trust building on Lambton Quay must be one of Wellington's most loved and most distinctive buildings. Thus the opportunity to see it under the guidance of its new owners, **Maurice and Kaye Clark**, was a special treat for many of our members on 2 March. For those of us who only knew it from the exterior, it was amazing to see the ornate and charming intimate circular entrance foyer and curving staircase with ornate tiling. But perhaps even more amazing was the large ground floor space. This has over recent years been divided into offices but because of Maurice's initial clearances is now visible as a grand hall with huge potential for better public use if the right tenant can be found.



Public Trust Building Ground Floor Hall

In 1976 the **Wellington Regional Committee** of the **New Zealand Historic Places Trust** devoted its third newsletter (a printed publication) to this building which was then as now under threat because of stricter earthquake rules. (Nothing changes!) Our Chairman, **John Daniels**, was then Director of NZHPT and wrote that his organisation "regards the preservation of the Public Trust building as a matter of national importance..... The building is an outstanding example of the substantial commercial and public buildings of the Edwardian period."

Relatively few such buildings were erected in New Zealand. This one is superbly designed for its corner site and lends great character to a rather undistinguished stretch of Lambton Quay." In the same publication architect **D. J. Beere** wrote: "Where else in New Zealand will you find such an extravaganza of Edwardian baroque? Where else such baldly modelled sculptured and gutsy facades?" Where indeed? Wellingtonians are extremely fortunate that this precious building is now under the care of a sympathetic and imaginative developer.



In the Foyer of the Public Trust Building

Military sites on Miramar Peninsula



The Massey Tomb in the Old Gun Pit

Organising this trip, which took place finally on 13 April, proved particularly challenging for committee members **Ian Jolly** and **John Daniels**. As well as obtaining permits from the **Defence Force**, special permission was given by the **Massey** family for entry to the burial vault and even cattle had to be moved to ensure people-friendly beasts were on the planned route. For a bus-load of HPW members it was all worthwhile, especially because of the knowledgeable commentary by military historian **Peter Cooke**. Starting from **Mt Crawford** prison (external

viewing only!) we worked down the hill firstly on a paved road but deteriorating to a muddy overgrown track past various heritage areas such as the site of the women's prison on Mt Crawford.

The military installations, like others around Wellington, fell into two general categories – those built during the late 19th Century in reaction to a threat of Russian invasion (and thus designed to defend Wellington's inner harbour from ship invasions) and ones built during WW2 to respond to a quite different threat, including from aircraft and submarines. The two main sites visited were:

- The **anti-aircraft battery (WW2)** at Mt. Crawford which contains 4 octagonal shaped emplacements with ammunition storage recesses and a command post with control room where advanced equipment had been held for tracking aircraft.
- The **Halswell battery (19th C)** at **Pt Halswell**, where there had been a gun pit for the 8" disappearing gun and underground magazines and control rooms. We were fortunate to be able to go beneath the **Massey Memorial** to see the underground rooms which are largely intact and the circular gun pit which has been lined with marble and now holds the black marble sarcophagus of Prime Minister Massey and his wife.

Further to the East at the Northern end of the Peninsula we drove up to **Fort Ballance**, started in 1885 and the principal coastal defence installation by the end of the 19th Century. It contains a significant number of buildings including gun emplacements, barracks, a musketry parapet, underground control rooms for a potential minefield across the harbour entrance and a rare "see-saw" searchlight emplacement. An adjacent battery is called **Fort Gordon**.



Peter Cooke Talking at Fort Ballance

Sadly these structures are badly overgrown and covered with graffiti. Without Peter's skilled interpretation, they would be meaningless to most visitors and we hope that the impending transfer of the land from a restricted defence area to DOC may make the site in due course more visitor-friendly.

Membership – A Message to HPW Members

Members are probably aware that we have been experiencing problems with the management of our membership records by **Historic Places Aotearoa** (HPA). These have been embarrassing and we apologise to those members affected. The committee has decided to move to take back its membership functions from HPA. There are a number of issues, including changes to our Rules, which have to be resolved before this can be done. We are discussing these with HPA and will let members know when new arrangements are worked out. The committee intends that **Historic Places Wellington** still remain affiliated to HPA as our national body.

Events

TALK - A Tour of Architectural Photography

This is our mid-winter event, open to members and non-members so tell your friends.

Date **Thursday, 10 July 2014** Time **7 pm** Location: **Schools of Architecture and Design, 139 Vivian St. Lecture Theatre 1.**

Jim Simmons is a software producer and photographer. He has photographed some of New Zealand's finest architectural history from the past 140 years. In this talk he will share some of his observations of interesting buildings from around Wellington, around New Zealand and from around the world. For more information on Jim, his website is: <http://www.nzpov.com>

Workshop on Photographing Historic Buildings

If you want to learn more about photographing buildings, Jim will also be running a workshop on Sunday **20 July** Time: **1 pm to 4 pm**

Place: **Old Public Trust Building, Lambton Quay.** Cost: **\$30** (limited places). Payment must be made by 13 July (1 week before the workshop.)

Other requirements: Warm and comfortable clothing, digital camera

Have you ever wanted to improve the story your photographs tell about a building? Jim Simmons is an internationally experienced architectural photographer and teacher. The workshop will be held in the Old Public Trust Building, where you will firstly learn the way Jim goes about photographing an historic building. After observing Jim at work, you will be able to experiment yourself under his expert guidance. You will need to bring your own digital camera. At times during the afternoon, your images will be seen and discussed by the group. The best images will be used in the next issue of Historic Places Wellington's newsletter.

There are only a limited number of places to ensure that everyone can get individual comments and tuition. A good standard of fitness is required, although only a limited degree of digital-camera expertise is expected.

Reel Life in Rural New Zealand films coming to Old St Pauls

Do not miss the opportunity to see ***Reel Life in Rural New Zealand***, a partnership between **Heritage New Zealand** and the **New Zealand Film Archive** which won the Most Innovative Public Programme Award recently at the 2014 Museum Awards. It is a compilation of 18 short films (70 minutes total duration) showcasing farming stories from Hawke's Bay to the Wairarapa. **Venue: Old St Pauls, Mulgrave St Wellington, Wednesday 18 June, from 5.30 pm.** Cost: \$18 for Heritage New Zealand members; \$20 general admission. The films will screen from 5.30 pm. Complimentary drink and nibbles on arrival. **Attendance:** Please advise Central Region office, Heritage New Zealand, by 9 June if you wish to attend. Phone 04 494 8320 or email infocentral@heritage.org.nz For details on the films, visit Heritage NZ's website.