

# Newsletter

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Editor: Ben Schrader

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## CONTACT US

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[wgt@historicplacesaotearoa.org.nz](mailto:wgt@historicplacesaotearoa.org.nz)

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## EVENTS

HPW events: 26 March, 7pm (public meeting)  
29 March, 2pm (members only house visits)  
See back pages for more.

## Tracing the history of Holloway Road and Aro Street



On 2 February Vivienne Morrell led about 25 HPW members on a fascinating historical tour of Holloway Rd and Aro Street. Here the party pauses at the Mitchelltown War Memorial at the entrance to Holloway Rd. (Image: Nigel Issacs)

## Is Modernism coming of age?

The demolition of most of the Category 1 Karori Teachers' College by Ryman Healthcare was in part made easier by the public ambivalence or indifference towards mid-twentieth century Modernist architecture. HPW and other groups tried to get public support for the College's retention but were unable to generate sufficient interest to mount a successful campaign.

Even within the heritage sector there is mixed views about the merits of Modernism. Its severe lines; steel, concrete and glass cladding, and lack of decoration alienates many. As someone closely associated with Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga (HNZPT) told me the other day: 'it's hard to love'. The person's verdict took me back to the late 1980s when I worked for the Historic Places Trust in the then Buildings Classification Unit. At that time Napier's Art Deco Trust had recently been formed to stop the increasing demolition of the city's Art Deco and Spanish Mission architecture. Our unit was putting forward a list of Art Deco buildings for listing at a HPT Board meeting. At lunch, a Board member revealed to me that he could not fathom the fuss over Art Deco architecture. In his view it was garish and ugly. I was gobsmacked.

The two judgements some 30-plus years apart shows: first, the privileging given to aesthetic attributes in assessing heritage value – over the likes of social or cultural value, and 2) that perceptions of aesthetic merit change over time. Few these days would describe Napier's Art Deco architecture as garish and ugly; in fact, people come from all around the globe to marvel at its beauty.

Architectural and heritage scholars have shown how architectural styles rise and fall out of public favour. When a style is introduced it's lauded for its modernity. After a few decades it comes to be viewed as unattractive and outdated – 'hard to love'. A few decades after that it comes into fashion again, now seen as "heritage" and in need of protection. The example of Art Deco Napier is illustrative of this process. In the 1930s it represented the birth, following the devastating 1931 earthquake, of the "New Napier". By the 1970s it was seen as old-fashioned and a sign the city needed renewal. During the 1990s it gained renewed public support, becoming emblematic of Napier's economic and cultural renaissance.



During the 1970s Napier's Art Deco and Spanish Mission architecture was unloved but is now highly valued and celebrated. Might Wellington's Modernist architecture be equally loved? (Images: NZ Herald + Wikipedia)

There are signs that Modernism is beginning to move from the second to the third stage of this cycle. There is no doubt that the near-total demolition of the Karori Teachers' College is a huge cultural loss and one future generations will lament, but it has raised awareness within heritage bodies of the importance of Wellington's Modernist architecture and the need to better protect the best of it. This includes skyscrapers like the former BNZ head office (Willis St) and former PSIS building (Featherston St). HNZPT is developing strategies to identify and list Modernist buildings and educate the public about the history of Modernism and ideas that informed it. HPW is part of this process. We and others hope that as the public gets to know more about Modernism it will be easier for them to love it.



## Old St Paul's

The earthquake strengthening of Old St Paul's is progressing well and Heritage NZ recently invited committee members to make a hard hat visit. Each floor board has been numbered and stored for return; the piano and the pulpit are in huge crates packed up by Te Papa experts. Concrete beams and steel are going into the building from large trenches in the ground. A vapour barrier and under floor insulation will be put in. Fire is a risk so no hot works are done inside the building and only LED lighting used. The goal is to see nothing except our familiar old taonga when it's restored - except improved heating! HNZPT are doing a great job and donations to them are welcome.



The interior of St Paul's undergoing strengthening work in January 2020 (Images: Felicity Wong)

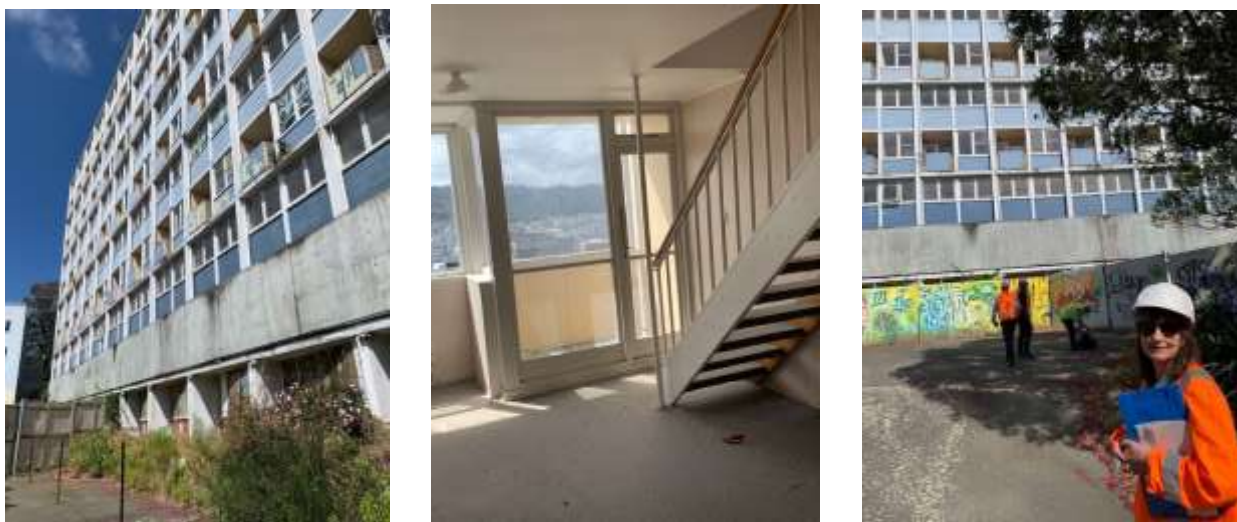
## Category 1 proposal for Naenae Post Office

February began with the news that HNZPT has proposed that the Modernist Naenae Post Office be listed as a Category 1 historic place. The building was opened by Prime Minister Walter Nash in 1959 and it completed the construction of the Hillary Court shopping precinct – New Zealand's first pedestrian mall. It was designed by Gordon Wilson and featured an elegant slab clock tower. It was the first post office clock tower to be built since the 1931 Hawkes Bay earthquakes, when new towers were banned due to their seismic risk. To reduce the hazard, the Naenae tower had a steel frame and was free-standing from the building itself. With post offices no longer a part of everyday life, it's important that we retain a good representation of this building type. The Naenae one is a splendid example and HPW members can express their support for its listing by following this [link](#) (scroll down).

## Gordon Wilson Flats

HPW is continuing to lobby for the retention of the neglected Gordon Wilson Flats on The Terrace. In January, HPW committee members Felicity Wong and Deborah Cranko joined HNZPT members and others on a tour of the building. Felicity was impressed by the building's spaces. 'With about 80 flats in the building it's appalling they've been so neglected. Each flat has a stunning city view at the front and afternoon sun behind. They have two bedrooms upstairs and a separate kitchen and living

downstairs.’ She and Committee member Ben Schrader met, separately, with a senior Victoria University official, Wellington Central MP, Grant Robertson, and HNZPT chairperson, Marion Hobbs to discuss the issue. The official promised to keep us informed of Victoria’s intentions for the building. Grant and Marion also pledged to work to find a solution where the building could be kept and adaptively reused, perhaps as mixed housing. In the meantime, the structure continues to deteriorate and we fear that it may end up as a case of demolition by neglect. We will endeavour to ensure this doesn’t happen. A very good blog about the *Immersive Legacies* exhibition on the Flats held at the Wellington Museum late last year can be read [here](#).



The Gordon Wilson Flats continue to deteriorate: the eastern facade; the living room of a flat, and Deb Cranko at the start of the tour. (Images: Felicity Wong)

## HPW Website and Facebook page

Late last year, Vivienne Morrell who administers our website made a few changes to it. There is now a [Resources](#) tab and by clicking on it you can find our [newsletters](#), some [useful links](#) and other resources. You might be interested to know that since we set up the website in August 2015 we have had the following number of ‘visitors’ (people looking at the website) – most are from New Zealand:

Year	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>482</b>	<b>2287</b>	<b>2658</b>	<b>2410</b>	<b>2294</b>

Each month, we have about 150 to 250 people looking at it. We currently have 661 followers on [Facebook](#). In July 2017 we had 176 and 525 in July 2018 (the increase is largely due to heavy promotion and paid posts during the first heritage week we organised in October 2017). You don’t have to be a member of Facebook to read our page.

## Past Events

**Civic Trust Awards Ceremony was held on 10 December 2019.** The Wellington Civic Trust Awards were established in 2002 by the Trustees to recognise projects which enhance the city and contribute to making Wellington the best city in which to work and live. The Awards are held every second year.

There are three categories for projects that enhance Wellington:

1. Projects that enhance or protect the essential character of Wellington – Excellence Award
2. Projects that preserve character buildings – the Grant Tilly Memorial Award
3. The People’s Choice – for art and sculpture installations in public spaces.

The winner of category one was Press Hall, 78 Willis St (Cheops Holdings & McKee Fehl). T G McCarthy Trust Building upgrade, 60 Cuba St was runner up, and two were highly commended – Eva and Leeds Street laneways and Te Mara Apartments, Mt Cook. The winner of the second category was the Public Trust Hall, 131-135 Lambton Quay, again Cheops Holdings & McKee Fehl. Maurice Clark spoke about his 'labour of love' in restoring the building. Centennial Flats, Berhampore (refurbishment project by Architecture Cubed) was highly commended. The event was held in the beautifully restored and renovated Public Trust Hall.



Maurice Clark speaks at the award ceremony. (Image: Vivienne Morrell)

### **25 January 2020 at 2:30pm, Visit to historic house at 186 Oriental Parade.**

This event was only able to be organised at short notice and we apologise to any members who would have liked to attend but didn't get sufficient notice. Fifteen guests visited and the owner gave them an interesting tour of the house. The house was designed by architect [Joshua Charlesworth](#) (who also designed Wellington's Town Hall) as part of a development of nine houses in a row on Oriental Parade. No. 186, the ninth house in this subdivision, was not completed until 1909. You can read more about it in the [WCC's historic listing](#).

### **2 February 2020 at 10:30am: Aro Valley walk.**

Vivienne Morrell led about 25 members on a walk through Holloway Road and Aro Street, outlining the history of the area and looking at specific heritage listed buildings. Holloway Road and Aro Street between them have about 50 heritage places in the Wellington City Council's heritage schedule (including most of the Aro Street shops). The area is known for its working class history and buildings. For those not able to make the walk you might like to watch [a 1993 television documentary](#) available on the Nga Taonga (Film Archive) website called 'The Gully-ites' about the Swensson family who lived at no. 41 Holloway Road (and other 'gully-ites').

## **Upcoming Events**

**Saturday 8 March: Queen Elizabeth Park, Paekakariki, open day**, starting at 10am. The US Marines Memorial Trust will be on hand to open up the display hut and share the stories of the men who trained here.

**Saturday 14 March: Baring Head Open Day.** Greater Wellington Regional Council will be putting on a bus from Wainuiomata Library to Baring Head which is home to a beautiful lighthouse and lighthouse keeper cottages.



"We want to celebrate the amazing people who volunteer in this space so come along to hear Friends of Baring Head share all the stories behind this amazing landscape and the hard work they've put into it! We'll provide you with a map and then you can explore to your hearts content. We will also have 4WD shuttles for the steeper bits of the journey, meaning anyone can get involved!" Starting at 10am from East Harbour Regional Park, Burden's Gate entrance. Free. There appears to be no registration required. See [GWRC website](#).

See [Friends of Baring Head Lighthouse](#) for information about their restoration project.

### **Sunday 22 March 3 to 4pm: Futuna Chapel Annual Open Day**

This year Ron Brownson, Senior Curator - NZ and Pacific Art at Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tamaki will give a presentation on the work of NZ sculptor Jim Allen at [Futuna Chapel](#). This talk is a free public event and is part of the annual Open Day celebrations, which start at 11am. Entry is by koha and no booking is required. [Futuna Trust's concert series](#) also starts on 22 March.

### **Thursday 26 March, 7-9pm: Restoring our old houses - Do Wellingtonians need help?**

Although Wellington has many built-heritage groups and associations, it has not had a group which focuses on supporting the on-going care of its iconic old timber houses. Historic Places Wellington is interested to find out if there is interest for such a group in Wellington. The **Canterbury Vintage Home Restorers Group** has been supporting members for 30 years. Founding members **Trevor and Jill Lord** will present at a public meeting their experience in forming the group and examples of restoration projects undertaken by group members. Their presentation will be followed by discussion. You can read more about the group in this [article](#). Venue: St Peter's Garden Room, 90 Ghuznee Street, Wellington (behind St Peter's Church). Admission: Free.

### **Sunday 29 March, 2pm – till appx 5pm (including afternoon tea): Northland villa houses visit**

We have arranged visits to four houses located near each other in the suburb of Northland. These houses are all heritage listed (Category 2). We will have a presentation from the owner of the first house. The visits will be followed by afternoon tea (at appx 4pm) at St Anne's Church Hall, corner of Northland and Randwick Roads. The visits are limited to **25 people – members only please**.

**RSVPs are essential.** Either email: [wqtn@historicplacesaotearoa.org.nz](mailto:wqtn@historicplacesaotearoa.org.nz) or phone Vivienne. If you miss out on, or can't make, the house visits you are welcome to come to the afternoon tea at 4pm, but please let Vivienne know, for catering purposes.



A ceiling detail; and one of the houses in Northland (Images: Left: Barbara Fill, Right: WCC)

These houses are historically associated with the Platt family. The family business was responsible for decades of very fine interior and exterior plaster work on Wellington's finest buildings in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Edmund Platt and sons operated from 1890 to 1912. The introduction in 1905 of large fibrous plaster sheets and the streamlined production of ornaments by the Carrara Ceiling Company brought an end to the small family firms. The Platts went on to become Northland's most influential speculative builders, with houses dotted all over the suburb, all

exhibiting the same attention to detail and quality plasterwork. These houses date from the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

### Upcoming evening class

Each year for the last few years Vivienne Morrell has run an evening class called '[City Stories: Wellington's Architectural Heritage](#)' at Wellington High School over four evenings in June, with a Saturday morning walk at the end. There is a charge, but if you are interested or would like more information, please click the link.



Visit to 186 Oriental Parade (Image: Felicity Wong). Holloway Road visit (Image: Johanna Nieuweveen)