

Newsletter

No. 33. August 2020

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Guest Editor: Vivienne Morrell

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CONTACT US

Our email address is
wgt@historicplacesaotearoa.org.nz

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www.facebook.com/historicplaceswellington

EVENTS

30 August, 2pm: Our AGM, with speakers.

28 October, 5:30pm: talks at City Gallery (a Heritage Week event, further information to come).

NOTICE OF ANNUAL MEETING

SUNDAY 30 AUGUST, AT 2 PM

**AT TARARUA TRAMPING CLUBROOMS, 4 MONCRIEFF ST, MT VICTORIA,
WELLINGTON CITY**

**The AGM meeting will be followed immediately by talks from three speakers.
Afternoon tea will follow.**



Our speakers will talk about recent heritage listings on the Heritage New Zealand List, covering 1860s Thorndon, early 1900s Newtown and the Modernist 1950s suburb of Naenae:

Chris Cochran will talk about [Cooper's Cottage](#) in Ascot Street, Thorndon.

Jamie Jacobs will talk about [Ashleigh Court](#) (formerly Langham Private Hotel) in Newtown (pictured).

Ben Schrader will talk about the former [Naenae Post Office](#).

Chris Cochran is a conservation architect and has been involved in heritage work for many decades. He is currently on the board of Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga, and is a long-time resident of Thorndon.

Jamie Jacobs is the Director Central Region for Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga. Prior to relocating to New Zealand he worked for fifteen years as an architectural historian for the Historic American Buildings Survey and the National Historic Landmarks Program.

Ben Schrader is a Wellington public historian, with expertise in urban history and built heritage. He has a long research interest in the history of Naenae as a model state housing suburb. It is from this research that the talk on the Naenae Post Office is drawn.

AGENDA FOR THE NINTH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF HISTORIC PLACES WELLINGTON INC, FOR THE YEAR ENDING 30 JUNE 2020

1. **Apologies**
2. **Minutes of Eighth Annual General Meeting 2019***
3. **Committee's Annual Report – Statement of Service Performance****
4. **Treasurer's Annual Financial Statement***
5. **Election of Committee**
6. **Appointment of representative to Historic Places Aotearoa AGM**
7. **General business**

** The minutes and the financial statement will be circulated separately to members. .Copies will also be available at the meeting.*

*** See below.*

Please bring to the meeting this newsletter and any other papers that will assist you for full participation in the meeting.

Note for Item 5.

Current Committee members who have indicated willingness to stand for re-election are:

Deborah Cranko; Sally Hasell; Nigel Isaacs; Christina Mackay; Vivienne Morrell; Richard Norman; Ben Schrader; Felicity Wong. Peter Dowell is standing down from the committee after many years, including time as chairman. We would like to thank him for his service. Under our Rules the AGM has to elect a minimum of six and maximum of twelve committee members. Office holders are subsequently elected by the Committee. We welcome hearing from other potential committee members who are interested in heritage issues and like working collaboratively.

Note for Item 6.

The following draft resolution is proposed: Moved that either Nigel Isaacs or Felicity Wong represent HPW at the HPA meeting but if neither is able to attend, that the committee be authorised to appoint another appropriate representative.

Annual Committee Report 1 July 2019 - 30 June 2020

Under our rules the Committee is obligated to report to its membership annually about activities over the past financial year. We are also obligated to report annually to the Charities Services on "service performance" so this report is designed to meet both requirements.

The **Committee** held seven meetings during the year, including two online over Zoom during the Covid-19 Lockdown. Nine members were elected to the committee at the AGM held in August 2019. Office bearers appointed by the committee were: Chairman – Felicity Wong; Vice Chairman – Ben Schrader; Minutes Secretary – Sally Hasell; Treasurer and Membership Secretary – Deb Cranko.

Two committee members were on the executive of **Historic Places Aotearoa** and reported on the HPA deliberations throughout the year (Felicity Wong and Nigel Isaacs). Several members of Historic Places Wellington attended the AGM of HPA in Gisborne in October 2019.

Membership numbers at the end of the financial year ending June 2020 were as follows:

71 single members

23 family memberships

10 life members

1 youth member

(105 in total).

This compares with: 2019 = 111 members; 2018 = 105; 2017 = 111 members.

Pleasingly, although several members have retired or gone elsewhere to live, we have recruited several new members. This is in part due to our new pamphlet designed by committee member

Vivienne Morrell. We have also created a 'youth rate' for people aged 25 and under and where new members join late in our financial year, we charge a half-price subscription.

A third of our subscription money goes to Historic Places Aotearoa to assist it with its advocacy and over-arching work.

As an Incorporated Society, our principal objectives of advocacy and education about heritage can be seen on how we spend our funds. We thank those to whose properties we visit with a koha and thank our speakers and kindred organisations with whom we share heritage events by making a donation. We made a donation to the Naenae Residents' Association to support its work advocating its important Modernist town centre. We supported Geoff Mew towards publication of his upcoming book on Fifty New Zealand Architects. We also donated toward a plaque marking the site of First St Paul's Church and for the Friends of Otaki Rotunda's preservation work. Our full-colour pamphlets have also proven a good investment. Our other costs are minor due to the work of volunteers, and we reserve our funds for specific projects.

The figures for our **website and Facebook** page show a considerable interest in heritage issues. From July 2019 to June 2020 we had 2,056 'visitors' to the website (an average of 171 per month). This compares with 2,377 visitors in 2018-19. Visitors in March, April and May 2020 were lower than for the same months in the previous two years; but June 2020 numbers were higher – whether this is an effect of the Covid-19 lockdown is difficult to say.

As at July 2020 we had 704 followers on Facebook (compared with 621 last year, 526 in 2018 and 176 in 2017).

Advocacy issues have continued to be a focus for the committee.

We made submissions to Porirua City Council on the US Marines Hall; to Wellington City Council on its draft Annual Plan; to the Government on its RMA review and on the proposed National Policy Statement on Urban Development. You can read all these submissions on our website's [advocacy page](#).

We commented on Heritage New Zealand's proposed listings re Otaki Health Camp, Naenae Post Office, Featherston War Memorial and Hamilton Chambers and we made a nomination for the Civic Trust Awards. We contributed to Historic Places Aotearoa's submissions on Planning for Successful Cities; advocated for tax changes for heritage building earthquake strengthening; and the importance of reflecting heritage protection in the post Covid RMA fast track projects legislation.

Despite the disruption caused by the Covid-19 lockdown, we managed to hold four **events** during the year. Three events planned for March and April had to be postponed or cancelled. In addition, we publicised in our newsletters and online other heritage events held within the Wellington region, such as Heritage Week in late October 2019 and Futuna Chapel open days.

Four **newsletters** were issued at quarterly intervals, sent either digitally or by post to all members. These contain news stories and commentaries about HPW's activities and about historic places in the Wellington region, illustrating these when possible by photographs.

Chairman's Report

This was my second year as chairman. During the past year the committee made solid input to various Government and local body heritage initiatives, and raised public awareness about fast moving local and central government issues relating to heritage. A special thanks to committee members - it's a pleasure to work with you all. In the coming year, we'll aim to be active in exploring the heritage of all people in Te Whanganui-a-Tara, and our regional areas, and to advocate for measures that support the identity and heritage of Wellington.

Thank you to every HPW member for attending events and supporting this important heritage advocacy.

Keep Wellington's Character (by Felicity Wong)



On 10 August Wellington City Council released a “Draft Spatial Plan” drawing maps of where height restrictions could be lifted, and planning rules removed. The aim is to accommodate a much higher population in a green city of affordable housing. Consultation is open until 5 October. You can read more here on the [Council's website](#). We encourage you to make a submission.

We believe the draft plan grossly exaggerates the development density needed and we are particularly concerned because the draft

proposes to break up Wellington's character areas (Mt Victoria, Thorndon, Mt Cook, Newtown, Berhampore, and Aro Valley). The suburb-wide protections the inner city areas currently have will be replaced with micro-areas of character protection for particular streets only.

The draft also requires six-storey buildings across large areas of Mt Victoria, Newtown, Mt Cook, and Berhampore and two to three stories throughout Thorndon and Aro Valley. That allows an overall density of absurd proportions. The de-regulation will enable 6 storey buildings to be pepper-potted throughout older suburbs which otherwise have a high degree of single and double storey wooden integrity.

The inner city heritage suburbs have housed workers and folk from all walks of life. Wellington's identity is its wooden houses nestled into the hillside. Development in Wellington should not erase its heritage and character and it's not about privileging one strand of history over others.

[Image: looking across part of Mt Victoria, by Vivienne Morrell]

Our Plans: HPW will encourage public awareness about the issues and make a submission. The WCC public engagement is very limited and its timing (during the election period), is poor.

The existing character area rule in our District Plan, which requires a resource consent to demolish pre-1930s buildings in heritage and character areas, needs support.

The Council needs to take another look at its out-of-date growth model by undertaking a new Housing and Business Assessment to check the projected growth figures and identify affordable housing needs. The heritage and character areas should be exempted from densification, as is possible under the new NPS-UD 2020.¹

Our Chair, Felicity Wong, made a statement to council on 6 August, which was reported in [Scoop here](#).

Wellington City Library building future

Wellington City Council is currently consulting on future options for the Athfield designed central library building on the edge of Civic Square, which closed in 2019 due to structural concerns. The options proposed by the council include three remediation options for the existing building (low, medium and high – obviously with costs rising with each) and two ‘demolish and rebuild’ options. The council prefers option C, which is the high cost remediation option, including retrofitting base isolation to the building.

HPW committee favours retaining the existing building, but has not taken a position on the options. Architect Ken Davis put forward a much cheaper option with a ‘quick temporary fix’ so the building could be reoccupied but with further work needed in future. [Read the [article here](#)]. The council does not like such an option as the date of the ‘future’ work is uncertain and it would still mean the library

¹ This is the Government's National Policy Statement on Urban Development, which overtook Wellington's earlier planning efforts towards “gentle density”, initiated under a previous National Policy Statement. The new NPS-UD 2020 requires 6 storey development within a “walkable catchment” of either the city centre or (planned or existing) rapid transit stops.

would have to be closed at this future time, with temporary library locations needing to be set up again.

The building is not separately listed in the Council's heritage schedule, but is part of the Civic Centre Heritage Area. It is also currently being considered for listing by Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga.

Public submissions are open until 7 September. You can find information [online here](#); or there are paper copies of the consultation document at city libraries. We also had an article about the library in our [August 2019 newsletter](#), which you can read by clicking the link.

Old St Paul's re-opened



Old St Paul's re-opened after being closed for 14 months for renovations. Open hours are currently 10am to 3pm. Since May 2019, work to strengthen the building's timber frame, shore up foundations and repair historic cracking has been painstakingly completed.

Old St Paul's closure also provided an opportunity to attend to tired infrastructure. The church now has new lighting, heating and sound systems to better support concerts and special events, and improved security and fire suppression systems to keep both church and visitors safe.

Old St Paul's was originally built in 1865-66 on the gardens of Pipitea Pā, a Māori settlement on Wellington's waterfront.

[Image of Marion Hobbs, Board chair of Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga, speaking at re-opening; taken by Felicity Wong]

Gordon Wilson Flats, 320 The Terrace (by Ben Schrader)



In late July Victoria University of Wellington announced new plans to create a 'new front door' for the Kelburn campus on the site presently occupied by the McLean and Gordon Wilson Flats on The Terrace. Their scheme proposes demolishing the latter building for new 'state-of-the-art teaching and research facilities.'

Under the scheme the McLean Flats would be retained and upgraded for postgraduate offices, a seeming win for Wellington's heritage. But this is no compensation for the loss of the Gordon Wilson Flats which, as the Environmental Court ruled in

2017, has very high heritage values. The university says it will take 10 years to realise its scheme and with it presently facing budgetary constraints it's unlikely work will begin anytime soon. This means the building will continue to deteriorate, raising fears of demolition by neglect. Perhaps the only hope is that there will be public sea-change in perceptions of the building and this will bring pressure on the university to do the right thing and include the Gordon Wilson Flats in its grand design.

Illustration: The Gordon Wilson Flats in the 1970s, with the Housing Corporation colour scheme of the time. (Image from NZ Architect no 5, 1978.)

Saved from demolition once, will it be saved again?

This lovely house at 38 Tyndall Street, Waiwhetu, Lower Hutt was built in about 1906. It was designed by well known Wellington architect Frederic de Jersey Clere (designer of a number of prominent, listed, heritage buildings) and occupied by Harry Miles Hayward from about 1907. Adrian Humphris and Geoff Mew noted that this house, and another built in 1905 in Central Terrace, Kelburn showed a less ornate style for Clere than his late 19th century houses.² As well as its association with Hayward (Hayward's Reserve is named after him), in 1953, it was sold to the Sisters of the Good Shepherd Trust and used as a hostel for unmarried mothers.

An article in the June 1991 issue of the Historic Places magazine noted that it had recently been saved from demolition when a new subdivision was built nearby. The house recently sold and it is understood that 23 units will be built around it. Concerned local residents have formed a group to try to save the old house. They do not yet know what the developer plans for it. Unfortunately the house is not heritage listed. Although we haven't seen the house, and it has had some recent additions, we would most likely support Hutt City Council listing the house in its District Plan heritage schedule.



Image credit: Hayward, Harry Miles, -1953. Three-storied house surrounded by trees. Ref: Pan-0176-F. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand. [/records/30630724](#). Photograph taken in the 1920s by Robert Percy Moore.

Past events

With events planned for March and April postponed due to the Covid-19 restrictions, we managed to reschedule the talk by Trevor Lord to 17 July at 7pm. About 50 people attended this interesting illustrated talk. Trevor and Jill Lord were two of the founders of the Canterbury Vintage Home Restorers Group and the audience heard about some of the activities and buildings their group has been involved with. The idea is to see if there is interest in forming a similar group in Wellington.

Upcoming events

Historic Places Aotearoa AGM: Saturday 17th October 2020: the Annual Conference of Historic Places Aotearoa: "Our Heritage Visible, Valuable and Protected for Future Generations" will be held in Whanganui. Our members are welcome to attend. You can read more in the June issue of HPA's newsletter *Oculus* – [link here](#). (PDF)

Wellington Heritage Week: This year heritage week will be from October 26 to November 1. The programme is not yet available, but keep an eye on [their website](#) for future details. We will be hosting an event at City Gallery starting at 5:30pm on **Wednesday 28 October**. Further details to come.

² Adrian Humphris and Geoff Mew, *Ring Around the City: Wellington's new suburbs, 1900-1930*, p. 128