

Newsletter

No. 37. August 2021

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EVENTS

22 August 2021 – HPW AGM

19 September 2021 – 'Wellington's Roaring Twenties'

27 October 2021 – 'Old or Green', HPW Heritage Week Talk

Discrediting Heritage



Wellington's Category 1 Railway Station became a subject of public debate during July. (Image: Stuff)

Since our last AGM Wellington's built heritage has come under a sustained attack that's surprised and troubled many of us. Heritage has become an emblem and scapegoat for a range of city ills: unaffordable housing, restrictive and officious planning practices, poor health among renters, Nimbyism, and more.

Critics have charged that the city's '[obsession](#)' with heritage is holding it back and stopping it from modernising. This was highlighted in the recent furore over the Railway Station's accessibility ramp and ticketing machines. It began when the *New Zealand Herald* journalist uncovered through an OIA request that Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga had opposed Metlink colours being used on ticketing machines in the station because it didn't fit with the [station's heritage colour palette](#). NZHPT was lambasted for being rigid and anti-modern – a stance pilloried [here](#). What was under-reported was that the discussion about the machines was part of the normal process of consenting changes to a listed heritage building and nothing had been set in stone. The whole story was a beat up designed to discredit both NZHPT and heritage advocates. It worked.

So how should we respond? One way is to retreat into bunkers and come out when things feel safer. But a better strategy is to front-foot the issue and seek to change the terms of the debate. We need to show how heritage can improve people's quality of life rather than diminish it; that it's not a barrier to new city building, but a pivotal component within it, and that it can be part of the solution to the housing crisis, not an obstacle to it. It's reassuring that there are new groups in the city that are adopting this approach and more will be heard from them over the coming months. We understand NZHPT is also looking at how it could do more to promote the benefits of heritage. HPW is part of this process. Over the next year we will be working with others in the city to better show the ways heritage is integral to Wellington/Te Whanganui a Tara's future.

Antrim House Upgrade



Antrim House (Image: Nigel Issacs)

HPW recently provided a letter of support for a funding application to Lotteries from Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga for the upgrade of its historic heritage building, Antrim House. Located in Boulcott Street, Wellington, it is the headquarters of Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga. Visitors can also visit its grounds and public areas on the ground floor, and sometimes the whole building on open days.

The Antrim House Upgrade project comprises re-roofing, exterior repainting, upgrade of some fire systems, some structural strengthening and related work. The project is a generational upgrade of the building to ensure its continued preservation. The project also includes structural strengthening although the building is not earthquake prone, and does not present any 'life safety' risk to staff or visitors at present. The project is focussed on increasing the seismic resilience of the building to

above 80%NBS. The project will therefore reduce the likely impact of damage to the heritage building in the event of an earthquake.

Antrim House is a magnificent old Wellington building with an interesting past and designed by a prominent architectural firm, Thomas Turnbull and Sons. It was completed in 1905 for Robert Hannah and his family (who became well known for Hannah's shoes). After World War Two the government acquired it and used it as a public servants' hostel. After the hostel closed in 1977, the building (in need of extensive repairs and maintenance) became the headquarters of NZ Historic Places Trust as it was then called. Antrim House is a unique heritage site and we fully support the funding application.



People queueing to do a tour of Antrim House during 2017 Wellington Heritage Week (Image: Seth Samuel)

HPW AGM - NOTICE OF ANNUAL MEETING
SUNDAY 22 AUGUST, AT 2:30 PM
School of Architecture, 139 Vivian St, Wellington

Following the business part of the meeting, we will hear from Paul Cummack, a conservation architect, about the challenges of trying to maintain old structures in the sub-Antarctic islands, particularly on Campbell Island. Paul has been an important figure in preservation of many of the city's heritage buildings, including Government House and the former Farmers' Building in Cuba Street. Paul is an entertaining speaker and his topic highlights the links between natural and cultural heritage in one of Aotearoa New Zealand's three [World Heritage](#) sites. We will also have refreshments. We look forward to seeing many of you there.

AGENDA FOR THE TENTH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF HISTORIC PLACES WELLINGTON INC, FOR THE YEAR ENDING 30 JUNE 2021

1. **Apologies**
2. **Minutes of Ninth Annual General Meeting 2020***
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 are attached. 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, and Felicity Wong. 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. We would especially welcome anyone who wants to help organise members' events.

Note for Item 6.

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

Annual Committee Report 1 July 2020 - 30 June 2021

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** continues to meet approximately every five to six weeks during the year. Eight members were elected to the committee at the AGM held in August 2020. Due to a Covid alert level change we had last year's AGM online over Zoom, with the speakers being heard in person later. 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 (HPA)** and reported on the HPA deliberations throughout the year (Felicity Wong and Nigel Isaacs). Some members of Historic Places Wellington attended the AGM of HPA in Whanganui in October 2020.

We reached 78 individual and 25 family **members**, in addition to our ten life members. We provide a discounted membership rate for youth (25 and under).

Our **accounts** remain in a healthy state (with approximately \$27,304 in funds). The largest outgoing and the largest audience (over 100) was the Modernism event in Heritage week. Its total cost was \$2,571.80 which included our guest speakers' travel and the venue hire and hospitality. Our levy to HPA (which is based on member numbers in September) was \$1,030. We made a contribution to historian John Martin's forthcoming book 'Empire City' of \$750. The expenses associated with the Home Restorers' launch meeting were \$302. We're grateful to the speakers to whom we provide modest koha for their insightful presentations.

While we have spent a little bit more than we have had coming in (about \$874), our term investments enable us to continue our members' events especially during the last Heritage Week.

We have shifted to internet banking for all our operations due to changes in the banking sector. Thank you to members for making the electronic shift for your subscriptions, and for your prompt payments – it makes it much easier to report the numbers of members to our parent organisation, Historic Places Aotearoa.

Advocacy issues have continued to be an important focus for the committee. We made several submissions (on the WCC's Spatial Plan; Long Term Plan; and on its Arts & Culture Policy). You can read our submissions on our website's [advocacy page](#).

We have also commented on (and sometimes participated in hearings on) particular buildings at risk, such as the former Adelaide Hotel (also known as Tramways Hotel), Gordon Wilson Flats; Parkview Clinic or former Ewart Hospital Nurses Home; and the former US Marines Hall in Titahi Bay. We made some suggestions for additions to the Hutt City Council Heritage Schedule.

We made input to HPA's submission on urban development policy, RMA reform submission, and an unsuccessful grant application for Blue Plaque funding. Our chair made media comments on the Daysh House in Lower Hutt, and on St Gerard's Church closing in May 2021.

We commented on Heritage New Zealand's proposed listings re: Thomas King Observatory (Botanical Gardens); Old St Paul's Schoolroom (at Thorndon School); Petone Memorial Technical College; McLean and Gordon Wilson Flats; and Wellington City Library.

We held eight **events** during the year, including talks and visits to some Northland villas, which was postponed from 2020 due to the lockdown; a visit to Ōtaki; an Island Bay history walk; a Mt Victoria house restoration; a 1920s car-themed walk; a public talk as part of Wellington Heritage Week; our AGM was held online but the speakers were heard in person; and a talk on restoring old houses. In addition, we began a Home Restorers Group for those who are interested in restoring an old house, which held a number of meetings.

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.

The figures for our **website and Facebook** page show a considerable interest in heritage issues. From 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021 we had 3,709 'visitors' to the website, an average of 309 per month. This is a considerable increase over the previous year and is in fact our best year since we set up the website in August 2015, as the table shows.

Financial year	Website visitor numbers	Average per month
2015-16 (from August)	1,627	148 (11 months)
2016-17	2,259	188
2017-18	2,820	235
2018-19	2,377	198
2019-20	2,056	171
2020-21	3,709	309

As at July 2021 we had 891 followers on Facebook (compared with 704 last year; 621 in 2019; 526 in 2018 and 176 in 2017). The most popular posts tend to be about specific buildings.

Chairperson's report – Felicity Wong

A warm thank you to all members for supporting HPW's work. We had a big year of events and advocacy about heritage. Our schedule of events ranged from talks to house visits and trips further afield. The new Home Restorers Group is timely given the lack of information available with publications now out of print and skilled carpenters and tradesmen retiring.

My focus for the year was on working behind the scenes to encourage thousands of Wellingtonians to make submissions on the WCC's Spatial Plan (a zoning plan). It was terrific that so many folks made substantive submissions and attended hearings.

Debate about planning and density in Wellington revealed sometimes divided public opinion about heritage values. We put the case forward that the built heritage of our city makes it an interesting and beautiful place for all Wellingtonians and that we are not opposed to good quality development

in appropriate places. A lot is happening in the CBD and more could happen in Adelaide Rd and Te Aro, for example.

We had great support from Mayor Foster and several Councillors (Young, Pannett, Calvert, Woolf and Sparrow) but it was sad that our effort was ignored by a majority of Council politicians who voted to radically reduce protection of our old heritage suburbs. The demolition controls will now be lifted from nearly 75% of the inner suburbs, potentially allowing the native timber cottages and villas, which make Wellington so full of character, to be demolished.

The Spatial Plan will now inform the Draft District Plan rules - due out in October. So it will be another mountain to climb going through the District Plan process.

Lastly, my thanks to the Committee who each did so much work during the year: Ben our urban historian, newsletter writer and talk host; Deb our Treasurer; Vivienne who hosts tours, keeps you informed and provides our Facebook and website communications; Sally our minute secretary; Christina for organising and hosting the Home Restorers Group; Nigel our HPA representative; and Richard our talks host and networker (who also published a book this year.)

Past Events

Sunday 27 June, Northland villas visit – Vivienne Morrell

About 30 members enjoyed an event in the Wellington suburb of Northland, including refreshments, and talks about the Platt family design and building firm of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, followed by a visit to two of their houses.

With Wellington at Covid-19 alert level 2 (events of up to 100 people allowed) and heavy rain in the morning, it wasn't looking very promising. However, we got a few hours of dry weather in the afternoon, and everyone enjoyed the well organised programme.

Christina Mackay, architect and adjunct research fellow at the Wellington School of Architecture and HPW committee member, organised the day and gave an illustrated presentation about Edmund Platt and his sons. This presentation was shared with Alan Jones, an owner of one of the Platt houses. And Kay Poynton shared lively anecdotes and photographs about the family. Her grandparents were good friends of the Platt family and lived in houses built by the Platts.



The interiors of the Platt villas were characterised by ornate decorative elements. (Images: Vivienne Morrell)

The talks and visits reminded us about the enduring quality of early Wellington architecture and housing for its people. The stories were about families, fun, work, active political life, beauty, lasting materials and a sense of local community.

Edmund Platt was born in London, England in 1850 and emigrated to New Zealand with his wife and two children in 1876. By 1880 Edmund had a steady job as a plasterer with Burton & Sons, owned a property in Mount Victoria and had four children; his first job was plastering the columns and capitals for the old [Supreme Court building](#). By 1884 Edmund was made a partner in Burton & Sons and had six children. He worked on the National Mutual Life Building on the corner of Customhouse Quay and Hunter Street. (It is listed as the [BNZ No. 3 building](#).)

By 1890 the family had moved to a new suburb in the north west of Wellington called 'Creswick' – now part of Northland. They were living at 73 Creswick Terrace – the date and builder of the home has not been confirmed. In 1890 Edmund set up his own business in Molesworth Street. Another heritage-listed building he worked on was the [Bond Store](#) (now the Wellington Museum.)

In 1900 The Township of Northland comprising 351 sections was established and the Platt family acquired a number of those sections. In 1901/02, 10 Farm Road was built for son Walter and his family and was occupied by his wife Emily until 1971. Alan Jones told us some of the distinguishing features of a Platt house – concrete foundations, which was unusual for that time, distinctive plastered chimneys, lath and plaster walls, fine interior joinery and (unless subsequently removed) they usually have a lot of decoration inside and out.

In 1905 factory production of plaster board and of decorative plaster ornaments threatened the viability of the Platts residential work so they began to build houses for others. Around this time Edmund provided land for and was active in designing, building and financing [St Anne's Church](#), 77 Northland Road (privately owned and no longer a church) and a church school.

In 1907, 11 Farm Road was built for son Frederick and his family; Frederick lived there until 1946 when he died and Emma until 1966. In 1912 Edmund Platt & Sons closed its doors. By then, they had built a number of houses in Northland. Those listed by Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga are: 82 Creswick Terrace; 5, 10, 11 and 13 Farm Road; 77 and 92 Northland Road. Other known houses (but not listed): 78 Creswick Terrace; 14, 26 and 35 Farm Road and 83 Harbour View Road. Edmund Platt died on 9 August 1927 and is buried at the Bolton Street Cemetery.

Upcoming Events

Our AGM is on **22 August, 2:30pm** – for details see earlier in this newsletter.

On **Sunday 19 September, 3pm**: Richard Norman will talk about 'Wellington's Roaring Twenties'.

During the 1920s, Wellington grew rapidly as a result of the new technologies of the motor car, electricity, films, broadcasting and aviation and services such as rail, insurance, finance, road construction and government support for farm exports and research. Richard will discuss leaders of the 1920s and illustrate with heritage buildings they created. This talk draws on research for a recently published centennial history of Rotary in New Zealand, founded in June 1921 in Wellington and Auckland. It will be held in the Garden Room, St Peter's Church, 211 Willis Street, beginning at 3:00pm. The Garden Room is behind the church and accessed off Ghuznee Street. (Please note this date is different from the one earlier advised by email.)

Wellington Heritage Week is on from 25 October (Labour Day) to 31 October. We are hosting a public talk by Brenda and Robert Vale: *Old or Green? Is the Greenest Building an Old Building?* On at LT2, Architecture School, Vivian Street, **Wed 27 October, 5:30pm**.

What are the environmental, health, and comfort benefits from improving older houses rather than building new ones? Older NZ houses can be cold and damp, but does this mean that they have no value and should be demolished to be replaced by new buildings?

Brenda and Robert Vale are internationally renowned architects, writers, and thinkers. Winners of the United Nations Global 500 Award for Environmental Achievement in 1994, they are authors of numerous books including *The Autonomous House*, *Green Architecture*, *The New Autonomous House*, and *Time to Eat the Dog? No booking is required.*

The programme for this year’s Heritage Week will be available in the next week or two from [here](#).



These images of a cottage in Norway St, Aro Valley, highlight how restoration can be a greener alternative to demolition. (Image: Nigel Issacs)

Reminder Subscriptions due for 2021/22.

Our membership year goes from 1 July to 30 June. Over half of our members have renewed their subscriptions for the current year. An email reminder will be sent to those who haven’t in the next few days.

Our preferred method is to pay by Internet Banking to our Westpac account: **03 0584 0244032 00**. Be sure to include your name in the payee reference details.

But you can also pay in person into our account at a Westpac Branch, or bring your money to our AGM (in an envelope with your name on it, please).

Our yearly membership rates are:

Membership Types	Rate (per annum)
Individual	\$30
Family (2 adults plus children under 18)	\$45
Youth (25 and under)	\$10
Corporate	\$100