

# NEWSLETTER

No. 53. August 2025

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## JOIN US

To join Historic Places Wellington or learn more about HPW, go to [www.historicplaceswellington.org](http://www.historicplaceswellington.org).

## CONTACT US

Our email address is  
[wgtn@historicplacesaotearoa.org.nz](mailto:wgtn@historicplacesaotearoa.org.nz)

## VISIT our Facebook page

[www.facebook.com/historicplaceswellington](https://www.facebook.com/historicplaceswellington)

## EVENTS

**Sunday 24 August – HPW AGM & speaker John Martin**

**Saturday 27 Sept – Visit and walking tour**

**18 October – 9 Nov: Wellington Heritage Festival**

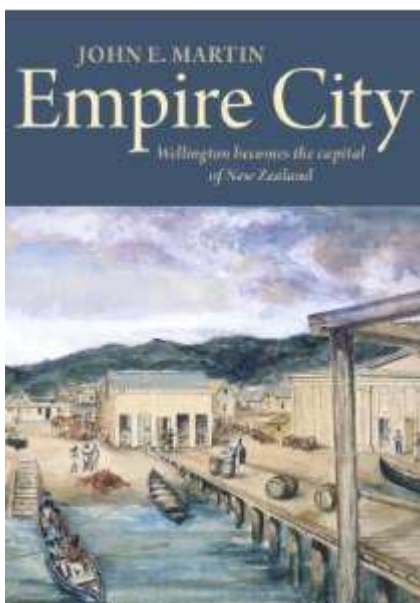
## HPW AGM – NOTICE OF ANNUAL MEETING

**SUNDAY 24 AUGUST, AT 2:00 PM**

**St Peter's Church Garden Room, 211 Willis St, Wellington**

**(Access from Ghuznee St)**

Following the business part of the meeting, we will hear the following talk:



**John E. Martin will talk about his book *Empire City* (published 2022 by Te Herenga Waka University Press).**

So little is known of Wellington's earliest decades, particularly as there are few physical remnants of this era and even the original shore line no longer exists. *Empire City* makes a start on filling this gap and this presentation will look at some of the key elements shaping the central city from those early days. It tells the story of the city from its origins as a makeshift New Zealand Company settlement with its 'official' centre in Thorndon and its commercial centre in Te Aro. The story includes phases of harbour reclamation – crucial to the city's development; construction of public buildings – integral to settler aspirations for the town; and the development of commercial and harbour infrastructure – vital to its economic future. All these elements and more justified Wellington's claims to be the country's 'Empire City' and were instrumental in its becoming New Zealand's capital.

Dr. John E. Martin has written about New Zealand history since the 1980s, teaching in universities and employed as an historian in the public sector and as parliamentary historian. His books include rural and labour history, the history of science and engineering, and social and political history, including biographies. He currently works as a freelance historian and edits the *Onslow Historian*. A companion book to *Empire City* – a biography of Isaac Featherston – is in the press and will be launched in September.

We will also have refreshments. We look forward to seeing many of you there.

## **AGENDA FOR THE FOURTEENTH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF HISTORIC PLACES WELLINGTON INC, FOR THE YEAR ENDING 30 JUNE 2025**

1. **Apologies**
2. **Minutes of Thirteenth Annual General Meeting 2024\***
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; Sue Dale; Sally Hasell; Nigel Isaacs; Christina Mackay; Vivienne Morrell; Richard Norman, and Felicity Wong. Barbara Rouse has indicated willingness to stand. 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 7.**

The following draft resolution is proposed: Moved that Felicity Wong represent HPW at the HPA meeting but if she is unable to attend, that the committee be authorised to appoint another appropriate representative.

## **Annual Committee Report 1 July 2024 - 30 June 2025**

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 six weeks during the year. Eight members were elected to the committee at the AGM held in August 2024. Office bearers appointed by the committee were: Chairman – Felicity Wong; Minutes Secretary – Sally Hasell; Treasurer and Membership Secretary – Deb Cranko. Barbara Rouse joined the committee in May 2025.

We reached 71 individual, 34 family, and one youth **memberships**, in addition to our nine life members. We provide a discounted membership rate for youth (25 and under).

Our **accounts** remain in a healthy state (with approximately \$21,500 in funds). The largest items of expenditure were our levy to Historic Places Aotearoa; a contribution we made towards Wellington Heritage Festival 2025 and contributions towards publishing costs of Elizabeth Cox's book on Mr Ward's Maps and improved history signage at the Embassy Theatre. We are grateful to the speakers and hosts of visits, to whom we provide modest koha for their insightful presentations.

**Advocacy** issues have continued to be an important focus for the committee. We made three submissions (letters to Victoria University on the Gordon Wilson Flats; to MBIE on earthquake prone buildings and to WCC on the District Plan). You can read our submissions on our website's [advocacy page](#).

We held eight **events** during the year: including three guided walks; two speaker events; and guided visits to St Paul's Cathedral, Robert Orr House in Lower Hutt and Massey House, Lambton Quay. Details, including photos, are on our [Past events](#) page.

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. All issues are on our website under [Resources / Newsletters](#).

The figures for our **website and Facebook** page show a considerable interest in heritage issues. From 1 July 2024 to 30 June 2025, we had 4,001 'visitors' to the website, an average of 333 per month. This is our second-best year since we set up the website in August 2015. As at July 2025 we had 1295 followers on [Facebook](#) (up from 1152 last year). The most popular posts tend to be about specific buildings. We set up an Instagram page on February 3<sup>rd</sup> 2023. We have made 60 posts to date and have 200 followers. Find us here: [Instagram](#) (#historicwelly)

## Chairperson's report – Felicity Wong

Thank you to every member for your continued support. We try to offer interesting and companionable events for you and information to keep up to date with local heritage issues. HPW's "socials" are fed by Vivienne Morrell who has quite a following. Our steady financial position is maintained by Treasurer Deborah Cranko. The committee members are all standing for re-election, with the welcome addition of Barbara Rouse. Barbara has experience with heritage policy under the RMA and we hope Hon Chris Bishop's upcoming "RMA reform" won't engineer it to oblivion!

During the 2024/25 year HPW supported key initiatives. Elizabeth Cox's new book on the Thomas Ward Maps will be an important contribution to understanding inner city Wellington's urban heritage. We generously donated to the Wellington Heritage Festival. It reaches new audiences and offers great walks, talks, and visits in a busy few weeks (18 Oct to 9 Nov).

A major achievement this year was the acceptance by Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga of the entry to the heritage list of the Chapel of Our Lady of Compassion, Island Bay. The recognition of its importance for all New Zealanders of the final resting place of Suzanne Aubert as a Category 1 Historic Place was most welcome.

Among current issues are the WCC's earthquake strengthening needs for the Michael Fowler Centre, and HPW will nominate it for entry into the list. Freyberg Pool, the Opera House and the Bond Store also require strengthening and are potentially threatened. The Civic Trust is awaiting the outcome of its request to the High Court for Judicial Review of the Council's demolition decision of 5 December 2024 of the City to Sea Bridge.

We've also supported the Architecture Centre's professional preparation of re-use plans for the demolition-threatened Gordon Wilson Flats. That's a long shot unless it can be achieved more cheaply than demolition and rebuild as student accommodation. Tentative better news is that the owners of St Gerards are exploring earthquake strengthening options, and that work on the Oriental Bay Band Rotunda has re-started.

Please encourage others to join HPW.

## Mr Ward's Map – forthcoming book by Elizabeth Cox



I'm currently in the last stages of my next book - "Mr Ward's Map: Early Wellington Street by Street", a book about a very special map drawn of Wellington in the 1890s and the social history of the city. It will be out by Christmas!

As a fundraiser for the publication costs, we are selling framed copies of individual sheets from the map. I'm offering a personalised service – I will be happy to assist you to choose which is the best map for you – for example your home, workplace or favourite spot in the city. If you live in a pre-1900 house in Wellington, I will be able to locate it for you on the map. The map includes the following suburbs: Thorndon — Mount Victoria — Oriental Bay — Te Aro Flat and the CBD — Mount Cook — Aro Valley — Newtown — Berhampore.

There are lots of beautiful framing options, all printed and framed in NZ - check out my website for more details and to contact me. The prints are around A3 in size, and look stunning framed. They only cost \$200 plus courier. [www.bayheritage.co.nz/mr-wards-maps/](http://www.bayheritage.co.nz/mr-wards-maps/)



## Kumutoto Stream recognised as wāhi tūpuna

A wāhi tūpuna is defined as 'a place important to Māori for its ancestral significance and associated cultural and traditional values'. Kumutoto awa /stream comes from the Pukehinau Ridge, an area where Te Herenga Waka / Victoria University's Kelburn campus is located. Its outlet was once around the Woodward St/ Lambton Quay intersection, but

with reclamation it is now where Michel Tuffery's [Kina sculptures](#) are located on the waterfront. Most of the stream is culverted; the visible section of stream is below Salamanca Road and it is this that has been recognised by Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga. You can read more [here](#) and [here](#). (Image: HNZPT)

## House Museums in England by Cherie Jacobson



This year I was very fortunate to be awarded a Winston Churchill Fellowship to undertake a study tour of historic house museums in England and Ireland. Over four weeks from late May I visited 26 houses with a focus on those celebrating creatives and run by charitable trusts, to make them as relevant as possible to my work as the Director of Katherine Mansfield House & Garden. I met with staff from most of the houses to gain insight into their approaches to interpretation, conservation, accessibility initiatives, education and public programmes, and revenue generation. I've been posting about each of the houses on the [Katherine Mansfield House & Garden Facebook](#) and Instagram pages and will be giving a **public talk** on the evening of Monday 22 September – details at <https://www.katherinemansfield.com/event/homes-away-from-home>

(Image: Cherie Jacobson at Monks House, home of Virginia Woolf. Photo supplied.)



## Upcoming Events

**Sunday 24 August at 2pm. HPW AGM, St Peter's Church Garden Room, 211 Willis Street and speaker John E Martin**

Details are at the beginning of this newsletter.

**Saturday 27 September 10:30am. Visit to the former Brigidine Convent, 1 Wanaka Street, Johnsonville** (opposite Waitohi Library) – there will be a tour and refreshments to follow. After that, Felicity Wong will take those interested on a walking tour of some places showing the history of Johnsonville.

The order of Brigidine nuns was founded in Ireland in February 1807. Later in the 19<sup>th</sup> century some went to Australia and in 1898 to New Zealand to start a school and convent (St Bride's) in Masterton. They expanded to other areas, and the building we will visit was completed in 1937. It is now occupied by Challenge 2000, a youth and family social services agency. We will hear about the history, the building, have a tour and refreshments. Cost \$20 per person to cover morning tea and a contribution to their work. **Please [RSVP to Vivienne](#)** before you pay into our account.

Following our visit, Felicity Wong, our chair and president of Onslow Historical Society, will lead us on a walk around parts of Johnsonville. Felicity writes a weekly 'local history' column in the northern suburbs *Independent Herald*. She wrote about the Brigidines in the 3 April 2025 issue – you can read a [PDF version here](#). (Scroll to page 10).

## Other events of interest

**29 August, 5pm:** Felicity Wong is giving an illustrated talk to Friends of Te Papa on heritage churches of Wellington. Charges apply. Details on the Friends website: [here](#).

\*

**10 September 2025, 12pm to 1:15pm:** Celebrating Mahuru Māori: He wheako reorua o He Tohu and Pipitea walking tour – a bilingual tour. See National Library website [here](#) for details.

\*

**11 October Open Home Wellington** – home & garden tour fundraising event. See their website for more details including ticket prices: <https://www.openwellington.nz/>

\*

**9 – 12 October HPA and ICOMOS conference in Napier.** The conference is for community heritage organisations and people who value and love their local heritage in all its many manifestations. As well as papers and discussion, there will be opportunities for visits and walks. For further information and a link to register, see the last newsletter from Historic Places Aotearoa - follow the [link here](#).

Felicity Wong also has an article in the newsletter, on changes to the RMA legislation.

\*

**The Wellington Heritage Festival** will start on Saturday **18 October** and run till **Sunday 9 November**. The programme will be available around the 8th of September. In the meantime, you can read more here: <https://wellingtonheritagefestival.co.nz/>

\*

## Past Events

**We have had four events since the May newsletter:**

**Saturday 3 May 2pm:** "History of Taranaki Whanui, the Mana Whenua of Te Whanganui-a-Tara (Wellington)" by Te Karanga o Te Tūi Marino ("TK").

We had a 'full house' for two very interesting talks. "TK" outlined the history of Te Atiawa in the early 19th century and how they came to be in Te Whanganui-a Tara / Wellington; and its relationship with other iwi and with colonial settlers. We then heard from Rangimoana Taylor with his reflections on growing up in Simla Crescent, Khandallah and the formative influence on him of Khandallah Primary School.



We co-hosted this event with Onslow Historic Society at their building at 86 Khandallah Road (the former Khandallah telephone exchange building aka K.A.T.E.) The talks were followed by a delicious afternoon tea.

### **Saturday 24 May: Central city archaeology walk with archaeologist Mary O'Keeffe.**

Mary led 13 of us on a fascinating walk telling us about various archaeology projects she has been involved in – with large images to show to give an idea of what the

site used to look like and what artefacts were found. She regaled us with some interesting stories too. Mary is a professional archaeologist who has been digging around Wellington for 30 years.

(Image: Mary talking to the group on the waterfront. Photo by Vivienne Morrell)

### **Saturday 21 June 2025: Let's Build a Cathedral**

Over 20 members heard a fascinating talk and had a tour of Wellington Cathedral of St Paul, with architect Crispin Kay, who took us through the journey of this iconic landmark.

From its early design stages in the 1950s to its completion in 1998, Crispin shared unique stories, challenges, and amusing anecdotes that shaped the Cathedral's construction. Dividing into two groups led by Crispin and Elizabeth Kay, we saw parts of the Cathedral that few of us had seen, including the bells, bell ringers' room, lady chapel (an old church from Paraparaumu), the ambulatory behind the nave, and the flag room.



(Image: the NZ flag taken to Antarctica in 1957 by Sir Edmund Hilary – in the Flag Room at St Paul's Cathedral. Photo by Vivienne Morrell)

### **Saturday 19 July 2025: Visit to Home of Compassion Chapel and Resting Place, Island Bay**

Recently, Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga recognised The Chapel of Our Lady of Compassion and the Resting Place of Meri Hōhepa Suzanne Aubert as a [Category 1 Historic Place](#). Historic Places Wellington undertook some initial research and nominated the Chapel for listing, so we are delighted it is now listed.

About 20 members visited the Chapel in Rhine Street, Island Bay and heard about the building and some history of the Sisters of Compassion from committee member Vivienne Morrell, and about the Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga listing process from staff member Kerry Pollock.

In its decision, Heritage New Zealand considered a range of criteria, evaluating the architectural, social, spiritual, aesthetic, and historical significance of the site.



(Images: Home of Compassion Chapel. Photos by Vivienne Morrell)

**Reminder: Our 2025-26 membership year began on 1 July 2025.** Thanks to all those who have renewed their membership.

If you haven't yet, you can pay into our Westpac account: 03 0584 0244032 00 (by internet or phone banking, or in person). Be sure to include your name in the payee reference details.

If you want to pay in cash at our AGM, please put it in an envelope with your name on it, and hand to a committee member.

The amounts are - Individual: \$30.00. Family / couple: \$45.00. Youth (25 and under) \$10

If you're not sure if you've already paid, please email Vivienne and ask.