



# NEWSLETTER

No. 55. February 2026

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

## CONTACT US

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## EVENTS

**21 February bus tour to do the Sanson Heritage Houses Walk**

**21/22? March Visit to Terrace Villas (TBC)**

## **Building Act Changes & Heritage: Hon. Chris Penk and Expert Panel Event**

The Wellington Heritage Festival is sponsoring a panel discussion on heritage and building reform on 10 February with Minister for Building and Construction Hon Chris Penk, accompanied by an expert panel.

**Details: Tuesday 10 February 2026; 5:00pm – 7:00pm. Venue: Wellesley Boutique Hotel, Maginnity Street. Cost: \$30 pp. RSVP Required – see below.**

Minister for Building and Construction, Chris Penk, last year announced his decision to propose new earthquake prone building [EPBs] rules. That was very welcome given Wellington has some 550 EPBs, many of which have tight timelines for strengthening or demolition. The new rules will replace the New Building Standard (NBS), which has been a high bar for heritage buildings. New rules focusing on actual risk to lives, rather than risk to property will be very welcome. The proposals include exempting one to two storey buildings with secure facades. Targeted strengthening will still be required for buildings of more than two storeys. Early estimates are that there will still be some 250 Wellington buildings requiring strengthening.

Following the Minister's address, a panel discussion will explore the practical realities of the new framework, the risks and opportunities it presents, and how heritage outcomes can still be achieved. The panel features Iona Pannett (former Wellington City Councillor), Rob Jury (Beca), Ian Cassels (The Wellington Company), and Dr Jamie Jacobs (Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga).

Guests will be offered a drink on arrival, with canapés provided. Please RSVP early and arrive before 5:00pm so the event can begin promptly. To attend, please **RSVP by email to [dwatt@heritage.org.nz](mailto:dwatt@heritage.org.nz)**, and pay online using **your name** and “**Building Act event**” as the reference and code, to: **Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga; 03-0502-0939456-00**

All proceeds support the Wellington Heritage Festival and its ongoing community events.

## Plans for the Bond Store? – Felicity Wong



In late December I attended a Wellington City Council (WCC) meeting that was considering reports from Experience Wellington<sup>1</sup> (EW) on its museums. I drew Councillors attention to the footnotes in EW's annual report and its Quarterly report, which implied the Wellington Museum would move out of the Bond Store.

I talked about the Trustee obligations to the nationally significant Maritime Collection

(currently housed in the Bond Store and inherited from the Harbour Board in 1995), and asked WCC to ensure it got cost effective costing for strengthening the latter.

I recalled the Bond Store was already base isolated (in 2015 for \$7.2m), and queried the basis for the number being bandied around of \$90m to fix it further. It seems they want to move to Tākina Convention centre.

## Second Mt Victoria Tunnel and heritage implications

HPW gave feedback to NZTA in mid-December on its plans to improve SH1 through Wellington. Our focus was on the heritage implications on buildings in Mt Victoria if a second tunnel proceeds. You can read our comments on our website under “Advocacy” or by clicking [this link](#) (opens a PDF).

\*

## Upcoming Events

**Saturday 21 February:** Bus trip and visit to [Sanson Woolshed Café](#) and [Heritage Walk](#). The heritage walk is an audio guided walking tour. Wander through their seven heritage houses, representing different decades, at your own pace, as it showcases our life in Aotearoa New Zealand and some of the events that have shaped who we are today. There will be time for morning coffee, the audio-guided tour of the houses and lunch. The walk involves around 500 metres of walking and some steps, but otherwise is flat.

<sup>1</sup> [Wheako Pōneke Experience Wellington](#) (formerly Wellington Museums Trust) is a registered charity and council-controlled organisation that manages key arts, culture, and heritage sites in Wellington, on behalf of the Wellington City Council. It includes City Gallery Wellington, Wellington Museum, Space Place at Carter Observatory, Capital E, Nairn Street Cottage, and the Cable Car Museum. (Google)



The bus will leave from Wellington Railway Station at 9am and will get back to Wellington at appx 4pm. Bus cost \$59. Entry to Sanson walk \$20.

The bus cost and viability of this event is predicated on numbers attending. If there are not enough registrations, the trip will be cancelled. But once confirmed it's going ahead, we will ask for payment for the bus and refunds can't be given after that.

Open to non-members as well as members.

(Ed: I visited in November 2023 and highly recommend seeing the houses furnished in the time

period with the interesting audio tour. I especially loved the attention to details, such as these kitchen cupboard handles – see photo.)

Please RSVP to Vivienne at [wgtn@historicplacesaotearoa.org.nz](mailto:wgtn@historicplacesaotearoa.org.nz)

### **Tuesday 10 February: A woolly day in the Wairarapa**

Sue Dale, who is on our committee and has organised the above bus trip, is also the U3A events co-ordinator. She has some places available for a U3A bus trip to Masterton, visiting the Woolshed [Wool Museum](#) and Masterweave spinning mill in Masterton. Depart: Wellington Railway Station 8:30AM. [Entice Café](#), Aratoi gallery for morning coffee approx 10:30AM. Tour of Wool Museum with shearing and spinning demonstrations: \$14. Entice Café for lunch. Tour of [Masterweave](#) spinning mill. No charge. Merchandise available to purchase. Return to Wellington approx 4:00PM. Return bus fare: \$51. Payment details will be given to those who book. Please book with Sue at [events@u3awellingtoncity.org.nz](mailto:events@u3awellingtoncity.org.nz)



**21/22? March (Date and time to be confirmed)** HPW visit to Terrace Villas. [Terrace Villas](#) are five separate heritage houses located on The Terrace that have been serviced apartments for many years. It will depend on guest bookings as to which we can visit, so RSVPs will be essential so I can keep you informed.

I will email members (and put details on our website) once time and date are confirmed.

**Tuesday 10 March, 5:30pm National Library (and online):** Historian and author John E. Martin will talk about the life and work of Isaac Featherston, also known as Petatone, and his impact on colonial Aotearoa New Zealand. More information [here](#).

### **Past Events**

**Thursday 11 December, morning: Plimmerton heritage trail.**



A small but enthusiastic group walked around various sites on the heritage trail at Plimmerton on a sunny day, with lunch after at a local cafe. The sites are well signposted, and there is also good information online.

You can read about it here:

<https://www.plimmerton.nz/heritage-trail/> and I also wrote about it in [this blog post](#) (click the links).

### Mr Ward's Map – book competition

In the last newsletter we had a copy of *Mr Ward's Map* by Elizabeth Cox to give away. Nine members entered the competition and the randomly drawn winner was Cheryl Crooks, who was delighted to win. She has found her house in two of the photos and she says the book has sparked great discussions with family and friends.

## Local History

Some of you will know that our chairperson, Felicity Wong, writes weekly local history articles in the northern suburbs' newspaper the *Independent Herald*. Here we summarise a few recent ones, with links to the full article if you would like to read more.

### *Inverlochy House*



Inverlochy Art School (off Abel Smith Street) opened its doors to visitors during the 2025 Heritage Festival. Classes in ceramics, printing, painting, drawing, photography and more, are organised by Creative Director Cheryl Corrado in the gloriously old and grand historic home.

Named after a Scottish castle, Inverlochy House was designed by Thomas Turnbull and built in 1878 from native timber. It was built for Thomas and Frances MacDonald with 'fourteen rooms, two bathrooms, every modern convenience, water laid on, two conservatories, a viney, fernery, fowl house, wash house, offices and stables'.

(Image, 1890s?: Te Papa collection, from website: <https://www.inverlochy.org.nz/About-Us/History> )

In 1876 the couple lost their three sons in Wellington's scarlet fever epidemic. Thomas MacDonald was a land agent who provided financial services across the region. He promoted many infrastructure projects; was a City Councillor and Member of Parliament, a council member of the New Zealand Academy of Fine Arts, and an arts patron. The 1893 recession caused bankruptcy for him (as for others) and he downsized to a house on nearby The Terrace (now a motorway off ramp). In 1902 he bought another house on The Terrace, which he called Somerled (<https://www.heritage.org.nz/list-details/1404/Somerled%20House> )

By the 1920s, Inverlochy House had been divided into nine flats. In 1979 Arthur Williams, a property developer, purchased the site for a hotel. There was a campaign against demolition and eventually it was agreed the house would be saved and the developer got permission for two extra hotel floors and parking benefits at what is now the Movenpick Hotel next door on The Terrace. The CBD no longer has height restrictions so such beneficial deals are less likely. The Williams Corporation generously gifted Inverlochy House to the New Zealand Academy of Fine Arts which spent a significant amount on repairs.

The full article appeared in the 11 December issue on page 6:

[https://mcusercontent.com/c46c5bf979c5dad4eaca08d61/files/f4611f74-15dc-a939-ff8c-5ce5bb95e728/11\\_December\\_Independent\\_Herald\\_s.pdf](https://mcusercontent.com/c46c5bf979c5dad4eaca08d61/files/f4611f74-15dc-a939-ff8c-5ce5bb95e728/11_December_Independent_Herald_s.pdf)

### **St Gerard's Monastery & Church**



(Image, c. 1907-09. Turnbull Library, [records/22735909](#) )

Tours of St Gerard's monastery and adjacent church were quick to fully book during the Heritage Festival. In 1905 the Redemptorist Fathers of New Zealand purchased the site of "Fitzgerald's Folly". It was a large wooden house built some distance from town in 1871 for early citizen James Fitzgerald. The fathers bought the site for 500 pounds and lived in the house. In 1908 St Gerard's church, a large but simple gothic building designed by John Swan, was built next to the house. The church was funded entirely by the community reflecting the strong support the fathers had inspired in the local community.

The church was the first to be named after eighteenth century Italian St Gerard Majella, the patron of mothers and happy childbirth. On the outside face of the church is an unusual statue of a pregnant Mary (image below). The church was built of brick with a vaulted wooden ceiling, flanked by gorgeous stained-glass windows. When St Gerard's church was recently de-consecrated its magnificent marble altar was transferred to the impressively restored Cathedral of the Sacred Heart in Hill St.



The adjacent monastery building was built on the site of Fitzgerald's Folly in 1932. The two separate buildings fit together sympathetically high above the city as a distinctive landmark and historic place. The monastery building was built of reinforced concrete with inset brick panels.

Subsequent owners were the International Programme of Evangelisation (ICPE) who bought it in 1993 and private owners bought it in 2023.

This article appeared in the 23 October issue, page 6:  
[https://issuu.com/mail-wsn.co/docs/23\\_october\\_independent\\_herald?ff](https://issuu.com/mail-wsn.co/docs/23_october_independent_herald?ff)

### **William Gray Young, architect**

During the Heritage Festival local architect Rod Vorstermans gave a talk about William Gray Young who contributed hugely to Wellington's architectural heritage. Born in Oamaru in 1885, Gray Young's father was a jeweller, which may account for his carefully designed, and constructed buildings of quality, lasting materials. When he was twenty, he was one of the architects chosen to design working people's homes in Petone - the first state housing development. (You can read about one of his Petone state houses here: <https://www.heritage.org.nz/list-details/3591/House> )

Gray Young designed and supervised the construction of an average of six houses a year from 1907 to 1962. By 1912 he was a notable and successful architect with 16 houses under construction and was the youngest fellow of the New Zealand Institute of Architects. He designed a non-conformist Church of Christ in 1913, an Italianate style timber building in Rintoul Street which has a square tower, deep horizontal eaves, and a hipped roof. It was recently restored and refurbished for use as the vibrant Newtown Community Centre.

Gray Young explored various styles from English domestic revival; Californian bungalow, and colonial revival. He is best known for his neo-Georgian style brick buildings which have symmetrical facades and multi-paned windows.

In 1923 he designed the Truby King House, high above Melrose which was open to visitors during the festival and is a legacy of Plunket's mother, baby and whanau healthcare. In 1925 Gray Young's Wellesley Hotel building in McGinnity Street was completed in concrete with brick infills and harmonious proportions. It won a gold medal as a masterpiece of Georgian precision with its regular facade modelled in part on 17th century London architecture.

The meeting room of the Society of Friends in Moncrieff Street, Mount Victoria is a modest building with a central porch, flanked by double hung windows.



In 1930 Gray Young designed Weir House, completed in 1937, a Te Herenga Waka VUW hostel. Also completed in 1937 was Gray Young's Wellington landmark building the Railway Station. It is a powerful neo classical design with eight Doric columns, and a soaring cathedral-like interior for everyday commuters using the country's busiest railway station to enjoy. The grand interior was inspired by the Pennsylvania Station in New York (now demolished).

(Image: Wellington Railway Station, c 1937. Turnbull Library [/records/22341254](https://records.natlib.govt.nz/records/22341254) )

This article appeared in the 27 November issue (page 10):

[https://mcusercontent.com/c46c5bf979c5dad4eaca08d61/files/4349ce24-82b1-db62-755b-8781fcdbb864/27\\_November\\_Independent\\_Herald\\_s.pdf](https://mcusercontent.com/c46c5bf979c5dad4eaca08d61/files/4349ce24-82b1-db62-755b-8781fcdbb864/27_November_Independent_Herald_s.pdf)