quarterly newsletter of
Historic Places Aotearoa
JUNE 2024
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# Voice of HERITAGE

HISTORIC PLACES AOTEAROA

# Conference planning well in hand

## FROM THE TOP

***HPA President Elizabeth Pishief***

Hello everyone. Welcome to our winter edition of *Voice of Heritage*.

Arrangements are well under way for the Local Heritage Matters conference on 8-10 November in Napier at the War Memorial Conference Centre of the Marine Parade. The conference is about "Local Heritage Matters". It is for community heritage organisations and people who value and love their local heritage in all its many manifestations.

NATIONAL COMMUNITY HERITAGE CONFERENCE
NAPIER 8-10 NOVEMBER 2024
*Local Heritage Matters*

For the latest information on the Community Heritage Programme follow the link here: www.historichawkesbay.org.nz/conference

We are looking forward to community groups or individuals presenting short 'heritage bites' about their heritage places or activities. If you have a talk you want to give, please email info@historicplacesaotearoa.org.nz

The government is planning to pass fast-track legislation to streamline large infrastructure projects. Community involvement is deliberately excluded from the process. This legislation will seriously impact the protection of our

**Continued on page 2:**

# Opiki Bridge repair 'a major victory'

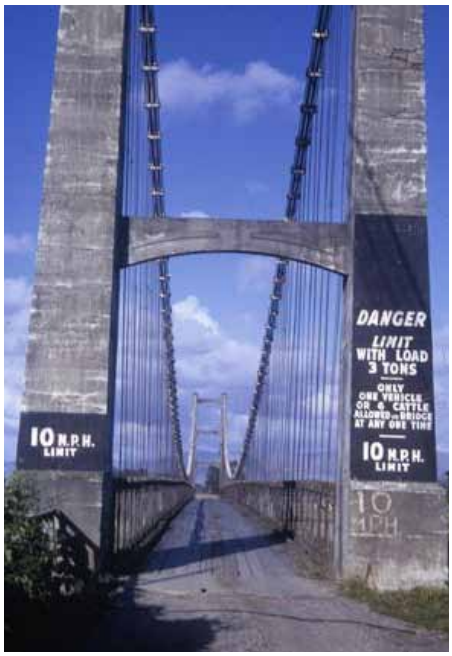
New Zealand's longest suspension bridge, when built in 1918, has been repaired after five months of extensive lobbying by Historic Places Manawatu-Horowhenua.

The bridge, which boasts a 436 foot long span, has a Category 1 rating from Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga and is listed in both the Manawatu and Horowhenua district plans.

The Akers family built the bridge at Opiki near Palmerston North to provide access across the Manawatu River to their flax mill. When the family later opened it to the public, the bridge became New Zealand's only privately owned toll bridge. This was used until 1969 when the new bridge was built alongside. Timber decking, removed when the toll bridge closed, was used to construct cattle yards on the Akers property.

HPA secretary Denis Pilkington said getting the regional council to make repairs to the Opiki bridge when it was in such an advanced state of neglect was remarkable and a major victory for HP Manawatu-Horowhenua (HPMH).

Its members had long been concerned about the bridge's worsening condition. This concern came to a head when the bridge cabling finally collapsed into the Manawatu River last September. The




**Opiki toll bridge.** Manawatu Heritage collection

Horizons Regional Council promptly declared it a navigational hazard.

The HPMH committee met three times with regional council engineers on-site beside the bridge in 2023, and corresponded frequently with Horizons and Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga.

HPMH chair Cindy Lilburn said the committee was adamant the cabling was essential to understanding the structure as a suspension bridge and should not be removed.

"Diplomacy was needed if we were to press our point of view with Horizons but still retain communication with them," she said.

The complicated legal situation added to the mix, particularly around

**Continued on page 4**

## Our executive

The HPA seven-member executive meets monthly via Microsft Teams. Its members are:

**Elizabeth Pishief (president)**
president@historicplacesaotearoa.org.nz
**Mark Gerrard (vice president)**
canty@historicplacesaotearoa.org.nz
**James Blackburne**
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**Jo McLean** (treasurer)
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## ARCHITECTURAL TERMS *explained*

**Toko Toru Tapu, Manutuke, Gisborne shows ordinary buttresses and angled buttresses.** Strike Photography

### BUTTRESS

**An architectural structure built against or projecting from a wall, serving to support or reinforce the wall. In addition to flying (think Notre Dame) and ordinary buttresses, brick and masonry buttresses that support wall corners can be classified according to their ground plan. A clasping or clamped buttress has an L-shaped ground plan surrounding the corner. An angled buttress has two buttresses meeting at the corner. A setback buttress is similar to an angled buttress but the buttresses are set back from the corner. And a diagonal (or 'French') buttress is at 135° to the walls (45° off of where a regular buttress would be).**

# Custodianship topic of interest

**From page 1:**

heritage places and is likely to lead to considerable loss of our heritage landscape. HPA put in a submission opposing this legislation. James Blackburne represented us at the select committee hearing on the bill as I was overseas at a conference.

James said he focused on the very short time frames and that the power is sitting with ministers as well as the limited ability of the public to have any input into decision-making. He noted that iwi who had not completed their treaty settlements do not have the same rights as those who have. The bill is undemocratic and unjust to most sections of New Zealand society.

The conference I attended in Galway, Ireland was the Association of Critical Heritage Studies, an international conference held every two years in a different part of the world. This will be held at Victoria University, Wellington in 2026.

The conference theme was 'custodianship'. It was interesting how many of the papers spoke about community heritage and the rights of indigenous/community groups. One paper discussed the legal landscape of heritage custodianship.

In Sweden, there is an old law: The Swedish Protection of Classics 1960, which protects objects against 'derogatory adaptation' after copyright has expired. It is an attempt to protect against commercialisation but is rarely invoked because it's impossible to prove that something has offended against 'spiritual cultivation' if no one is sure what spiritual cultivation is.

This law may be useful regarding cultural appropriation of indigenous objects especially since there are big gaps in the legal protection of indigenous heritage, internationally.

Another paper was about everyday heritage in the Ukraine. Everyday heritage is the idea objects, places and practices around heritage are embedded in people's daily lives, are often vernacular and affect their sense of place as well as ideas about continuity and change.

This paper was about caring for new or non-designated heritage in the context of the Ukraine War. It identified activities people were doing such as visiting old people and collecting recipes from them or identifying objects relating to the war.

The themes that emerged were the heightened attention to everyday, local heritage and a sense of urgency about it. There is value in community participation and the need to challenge expert practices. There was a need for unofficial recording and care for heritage without the bureaucracy of the state, which prioritises the designated and official heritage over everyday heritage, which is what generally matters to most people.

**At HPA's 2012 launch (L-R): Peter Dowell, David White, HPA Patron Anne Salmond, Governor General Jerry Mateparae, Anna Crighton, Denis Pilkington, David Kiddey, John Daniells. HPA executive committee was joined by Denis Pilkington (HP Hawke's Bay) and John Daniells (HP Wellington). Absent: James Blackburne, Mark Gerrard and Julie Luxton.**

# HPA still seeks national coverage

Historic Places Aotearoa (HPA) was officially launched at Government House in August 2012. It was born from branch committees of NZ Historic Places Trust that were disestablished when the Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Act was passed in 2014. At the time, there were more than 20 branch committees covering most of the country. Most initially expressed interest in affiliating to the new organisation, but very few did. HPA started with six member organisations – Tairawhiti, Hawke's Bay, Wellington, Canterbury, Mid Canterbury and Central Otago. In 2024, HPA has 11 member organisations and 10 associate members. National coverage is yet to be achieved. HPA seeks more groups to affiliate to the organisation.

# Awarded KSM for services to South Taranaki community

A love of social history, prompted by her mother recording their own family history, has resulted in Pātea Historical Society president and Pātea Community Board chair Jacqueline Dwyer being honoured with a King's Service Medal for services to the community.

Jacq has been committed to preserving South Taranaki history, particularly of Pātea, Kakaramea, Hurleyville, Alton and Manutahi for nearly 10 years. Her award was announced in the latest King's Birthday Honours.

Born in Kakaramea, she developed a strong interest in local history after returning to the district after living overseas.

"I love social history and finding out how people lived and the cultural changes over time," she said.

She has compiled several histories of small settlements and the families who lived there, of Hurleyville, Alton and Pātea.

As president of the Pātea Historical Society for the past eight years, she arranged for the publication of the late author Ian Church's book *Salutary Punishment*. The book about Māori prisoners sent from Taranaki to Dunedin in the mid-19th century was unpublished at the time of Church's death.

For the past decade, she has been uncovering and documenting the military history of South Taranaki towns, bringing to light the names and stories of men listed on war memorials in the South Taranaki area.

**Pātea Historical Society president Jacq Dwyer KSM with photographs of her relations, the Murphy Bros, commemorated within the Hawera Cemetery.** Catherine Groenestein

Her book *Patea RSA: 100 Years 1919-2019* includes stories from the outlying small settlements of the area.

She documented the names of hundreds of soldiers in both world wars, some for the first time.

In 2013, she helped coordinate the relocation of the World War 1 and 2 Cenotaph from the former Alton School to alongside the Alton Hall. This instigated the revival of Anzac Day services at Alton and saw crowds of more than 200 return each year. She also helped coordinate the restoration of the Alton Coronation Hall, which consists of a small museum with local history in the former Post Office, making it a suitable venue for large district events.

She has also maintained a keen interest in the Kakaramea Hall where regular community events are hosted.

She is now working on a history of Kakaramea School in preparation for the 150th anniversary in 2026.

Pātea Historical Society is one of HPA's longest-standing Associate Members.

# Urban historian a prime advocate for built heritage

**BEN SCHRADER**
**(1964 – 19 April 2024)**

It was with deep sadness that we learned of the death on 19 April of Ben Schrader, a fine urban historian and writer who loved Wellington and contributed his wisdom and kindness to all. Ben was an advocate for built heritage all his working life. He served as a committee member for Historic Places Wellington from 2015 to his death, including the last few years as deputy chair.

**Ben Schrader**

Ben's first major publication was *We Call It Home: A History of New Zealand State Housing*, published in 2005, for which he was listed as a finalist in the history category of the Montana Book Awards.

The following year he published *More than a landlord: a short history of Wellington Housing Trust*.

Ben was co-editor of the Economy and City theme of Te Ara – The Encyclopedia of New Zealand, authoring many of the city entries.

In 2016, Ben published *The Big Smoke: New Zealand Cities 1840-1920*, the first comprehensive look at New Zealand's early urban history. It won the 2017 W. H. Oliver Prize and the 2017 New Zealand Heritage Non-fiction Book Award and was shortlisted for the General Non-fiction category of the New Zealand Book Awards the same year.

He then worked as a freelance historian before being awarded a J D Stout Fellowship in 2022 to work on a book on the history of historic heritage. He gave expert evidence in hearings, public lectures and conference papers, contributed chapters to journals and publications, wrote think pieces for online media, mentored young historians and reviewed publications.

Ben was also a strong advocate for and public commentator on public housing policy and community building.

A fuller obituary appears here: https://wellington.scoop.co.nz/?p=159984 .

# Cables restored to Opiki toll bridge

From page 1:

ownership of the bridge – was it the Akers family or Horizons Regional Council, on whose land the bridge stood?

Matters finally progressed when Horizons determined they were the legal titleholders including the 'bit in-between'.

"I had the interesting experience of ringing Clive Akers to inform him he was no longer the owner of the bridge."

The aged cables were successfully pulled out of the river in March, but not without some loud screeches as the cables were drawn back up over the bridge piers.

"We have been heartened by the interest in the rescue of the bridge, often from surprising places.

"It seems there is immense public affection for the bridge, which has become an iconic feature of the Opiki area.

**Opiki toll bridge after cable had fallen into the Manawatu river.** Manawatu Standard/Stuff

She gave thanks to Don Irvine, retired engineer on the HPMH committee; Horizons engineers, who planned the repair and spent two days on site removing the cabling from the river; reporters from the Manawatu Standard newspaper for keeping this heritage story front page and before the public; and locals, who have over the years kept an eye on the bridge.

The repair work came at a 'not insignificant cost' and was unbudgeted by Horizons.

Cindy Lilburn said the committee's work was not over yet. Long-term repair would still be needed as the cables continued to age.

The committee proposed tying new cabling to the existing cabling to provide support.

"This would need to be costed and approved as a budget line in Horizons Long Term Plan."

**Lifting the cables.** Manawatu Standard/Stuff

# Wellington plan now has three main residential zones

*By Felicity Wong*

Minister Hon Chris Bishop has signed off on the Wellington District Plan, as amended by city councillors (apart from the de-listing proposals).

Wellington now has three main zones for residential purposes:

1. the CBD zone with no height limits
2. an adjacent growth zone within 15 minutes' walk of the edge of the CBD and train stops, where buildings of six or more storeys can be built without resource consent
3. all other suburban areas where three storeys can be built next to the footpath and on the property's boundary (with no "sideyard" allowing for maintenance).

The liberalisation of the zoning rules is the most radical change to city planning laws since the 1950s and undoubtedly delivers on political promises to developers to "cut red tape".

Let's take a step back. Zoning was originally introduced in Wellington to give comfort to the city's renters who were being encouraged to buy homes, but were hesitant about what would be built next door to their new biggest investment.

After World War 2, New Zealand followed UK Labour Prime Minister Clement Attlee's approach to planning. The arrangement was that land stayed in private ownership, but the right to build new property or to change the use of existing property was 'nationalised'. A landowner was required to obtain consent to develop from the local authority (representing local communities). The rights of private owners were balanced with those of the community. The approach was reflected in NZ's Town and Country Planning Acts of 1953 and 1977.

The 1991 Resource Management Act was a bold attempt to sweep away that development compact and allow anything so long as it didn't significantly affect the "environment". The development freedom became restricted, however, by a broad interpretation of protecting the environment, extending to protecting amenity rights on neighbouring property. Those neighbouring amenity rights have now been decisively swept away. There's no process in which neighbours can participate to ask

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# New heritage listings added to District Plan

*By Felicity Wong, HP Wellington*

Controversy arose in the recent Wellington district plan fast-track process when owners of buildings proposed for heritage listing objected.

The Independent Hearing Panel [IHP] had already rejected quite a few proposals (eg, an old warehouse at 154 Victoria St; modernist houses designed by Toomath and Alington; and Anscombe's commercial building at 233 Willis St).

Labour/Green councillors voted to de-list a further 10 buildings, each of which had been opposed by owners (but which had been earlier approved by the IHP). Given the paucity of evidence to sustain such delistings (five of the owners didn't present evidence at the hearing, including Victoria University for Gordon Wilson Flats and the historic Robert Stout administration building), the Hon Chris Bishop subsequently reversed the councillors' de-listing decisions.

HPW welcomed Mr Bishop's decision. Apart from that controversy, the IHP approved a number of new listings, not objected to by their owners. They are now new additions to the district plan.

All proposals were supported by professional heritage assessments and a considerable body of research and assessment. HPW commends Wellington City Council heritage and planning staff, and Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga staff for its supporting evidence.

The successful new heritage listings comprise:

- **three residential heritage areas in Mt Victoria (Elizabeth St, Moir St, Porritt Ave)**
- **64, 70, 71, 87, 89, 91 & 111 Brougham St houses**
- **89 & 140 Austin St; 64 Majoribanks St**
- **modernist houses (117 Campbell St; 60 Homewood Rd; 61 Hankey St; 17 Makara Rd; 210 Sutherland St; 49 Waiapu Rd: 7 Fortification Rd & 57 Trellisick Cres);**
- **older houses (30 Ascot St; 1 Milne Tce; 259 Mansfield St; 110 Oriental Pde; 56 Pirie St; 1 Queen St; 17 Parkvale Rd & 294 Main Rd Tawa);**
- **notable community buildings (Freyberg and Thorndon pools; Khandallah Town Hall; Makara School House; Mansfield St Gospel Hall; St Francis de Sales Church; Former Primitive Methodist Church; Hannah Playhouse; Johnsonville Masonic Hall & Berhampore Kindergarten);**
- **three large Oriental Bay apartment buildings (Broadwater; Wharenui & Olympus);**
- **four large commercial buildings (PSIS; Wool House; Manchester Unity & The Meteorological Office); and**
- **VUW's Gordon Wilson Flats & Robert Stout Building.**

That's an outstanding collection of modernist homes and large buildings, together with important and HNZPT recognised colonial-era homes and community buildings.

HPW congratulates owners for recognising the heritage value of their properties, and for their active roles as kaitiaki of those significant sites. We look forward to telling you more about them at our upcoming talk on heritage listings at 2pm, 30 June with Felicity Wong (HPW chair), Joanna Newman (Mt Victoria Historical Society convenor) and Angus Hodgson (house owner) in the St Peter's Garden Room behind St Peter's Church, Willis St.

**These photos show houses in Mt Victoria and on The Terrace that are no longer in protected 'character areas' so could be demolished without consent.**

# Smaller character areas feature of new zoning

**From page 4**

for the amelioration of any negative externalities of unsuitable development nearby.

Wellington was fast to adopt three-storey upzoning across the whole city. There's been no complaint about that. The recent arguments in Wellington about maintaining "character areas" and heritage designations were failed attempts to continue long-standing protected areas in the oldest heritage suburbs. In those areas, until now, the balance was achieved by requiring property developers to seek planning permission. The areas are now all zoned "at least six storey", with much smaller 'character areas'.

The strategic process of setting out the priorities for the Wellington District Plan began with a draft Spatial Plan in 2021. But with the city's protected areas, it never changed despite several thousand public submissions. A majority of councillors never deviated from the arrangement to keep just 85ha of protected areas, and "release" more than 200ha to private planning.

In 2018, the UK Government's independent study into the causes of slow construction rates ("Letwin Review") found that the main cause of lack of housing supply was not zoning, but "market absorption rate". That's the rate at which new builds could be sold in the local market without reducing the existing market price.

Leading Australian housing economist Cameron Murray wrote about the causes of unaffordable housing in his new book *The Great Housing Hijack*. It's worth reading.

To read Felicity's full article, visit https://wellington.scoop.co.nz/?p=160522

# Menorlue integrated into fabric of college

*By Maxine Watson, former Ashburton College Board of Trustees Chair, College librarian and heritage advocate*

Menorlue nestles within Ashburton College grounds on Walnut Avenue.

Soundly built from the finest timbers by W.H. Collins in 1893-4, this once gracious family home has seen many changes in its time while retaining a quiet dignity.

Many will recall W.H. Collins Ltd, the hardware and timber merchant on East and West Streets (and forerunner to Mitre 10), though the story of the man maybe less well-known.

After taking up an engineering apprenticeship in his native Cornwall, William Henry Collins arrived in New Zealand in 1865 at the age of 19. He worked briefly in Timaru before trying his luck for three years on the West Coast goldfields with his brother. He arrived in Ashburton in 1878, worked for local timber merchant Hayes, then managed McCallum's Timber.

Despite the depressed times Collins saw the potential of McCallum's and, when it came up for sale in 1889, purchased it to found the timber, hardware and joinery business W.H. Collins & Co. He also purchased 8 acres (3.5ha) of land between the then North West Town Belt and Middle Road on which he built his family home, Menorlue. This name is Cornish, meaning Manor-in-the-Lea or "sheltered place", and was the name of the farm on which Collins grew up near Redruth in Cornwall.

Over the years, he added to this original site until he owned some 20 acres (c.9ha). There would appear to have been several other buildings on this land – stables, barns and up to three other dwellings, but none of these remain.

Menorlue in yesteryear.

In its heyday, Menorlue was a lovely house situated in spacious gardens boasting many large and beautiful trees. It hosted many garden parties and public functions in keeping with its owner's civic duties as borough councillor (1893-99), Mayor (1901-03) and stalwart of Baring Square Methodist Church.

Collins also had a great interest in education, both formal and in trade skills. He fought hard, against considerable opposition, for the establishment of the Ashburton Technical School, achieved in 1912.

After his sudden death from pneumonia in October 1916 at the age of 70, his wife Sarah lived on at Menorlue until her death in 1938. Other family members lived there until the end of 1950, when it was taken over by the Government under the Public Works Act 1928.

The land was initially earmarked for an intermediate school and sports grounds but, in 1953, the Ashburton Hospital Board claimed it to accommodate visiting medical staff.

As the future of secondary education in the town was discussed over the next decade, most interest for new or expanded high schools focused on the old Ashburton High School and Hakatere Technical College sites.

In the early 1960s, some land close to Menorlue was subdivided off for residential housing. The rest, with extra land acquired, became the site of the new Ashburton College, opened in 1965. In the college's early days, Menorlue was used for extra classroom space, especially for small or specialist classes like art and music, and even for changing sheds for the swimming pool.

In 1978, Menorlue became the home of a successful community education programme for Mid Canterbury under the likes of Duncan McMillan, Ian Clunies-Ross and Diane Moss, until the government funding was withdrawn. For many years after the programme's demise, the campus property administration operated out of the building.

Menorlue is a listed building on Ashburton District Council's District Plan, but this has been little protection for other district buildings in recent years. Question marks over Menorlue's future have been due in large part to funding issues. Although owned by the Ministry of Education, the ministry did not acknowledge this or provide funding for its upkeep.

Still in sound condition, Menorlue – like all buildings of its age – needs constant attention if it is not to deteriorate. The college undertook its maintenance as and when it could.

Menorlue's future again hung in the balance in 2019 when Ashburton College was granted funding to rebuild its ageing classrooms. Seen by some as 'an old building that would be removed or demolished', local heritage advocates swung into action. Government policy for the protection of heritage sites on government land came into play in 2005 and it was found the ministry had its own policy to protect buildings and sites such as Menorlue. The building was repaired and upgraded with great care for its heritage features and importance to the Ashburton community.

Menorlue is now a revitalised, re-purposed and useful space integrated into the fabric of Ashburton College, to be used and enjoyed for years to come.

Menorlue today.

Views of original Newtown Church, 1920s.

# Newtown centre fit for long future

*By Alex Vakhrousheva, WSP Heritage Consultant & Conservation Architecture Specialist*

The Newtown Community & Cultural Centre was built in the early 1900s as a church in the newly established central Wellington suburb of Newtown.

The building was a two-storey timber-framed structure with large double-height windows, a belltower, and decorative soffit with moulded dentils in the Italianate style that run around the perimeter of the building. It was eventually bought by Wellington City Council in the 1970s and converted into a community centre. Over the past 50 years, the centre has served the local community faithfully; offering local adult education classes, providing services such as the Citizen's Advice Bureau (CAB), and serving as a production space for theatrical groups.

By 2020, the building had become run down and was no longer fit for purpose.

WSP worked with the client, Wellington City Council, and key stakeholder, the Newtown Community Trust, to design a solution that would bring life back into the historic building and make it fit to serve the community once more.

WSP provided full design services, from initial pre-design survey, concept, developed and detailed design through to construction observation, as well as specialist heritage consultancy and archaeology inputs.

The Built Heritage team led a multi-disciplinary project team of consultants that included structural, electrical and services engineers. A Conservation Management Plan was prepared for the building, as well as a Temporary Protection Plan to ensure heritage fabric was protected during the works, and a heritage induction register was established for all contractors working on the site.

The key driver for the Newtown Community Centre redevelopment was to restore those parts of the building that still had a high level of authenticity, while making it fit-for-purpose as a 21st century community facility. Working with WCC and Newtown Community Trust, the design team undertook a series of community workshops where the public could attend drop-in sessions and let the design team know what was important to them in the design of the new centre. Workshop outcomes were woven together with an assessment of heritage significance and recommendations based on the ICOMOS NZ Charter, along with engineering assessments, all of which informed the final design.

The theatre was recognised as being a highly significant space that retained important historic fabric. The raked timber floor, double-height arched windows, and timber trusses were preserved, while the addition of new materials and equipment transformed it into a high-spec performance space.

The dance hall was also retained.

Modified windows on the building frontage were reconstructed to the original design, and false floors added to the belltower were removed, flooding the reconfigured foyer with natural light.

The project has ensured that the social, cultural, historic, and architectural values of the building have been retained for future generations while simultaneously providing for the community's current and future needs.

The success of the project has been recognised in multiple awards programmes. It was a finalist in the 2023 Best Awards and was shortlisted for a 2024 NZIA Local Branch award.

The project was a Silver Award Winner in the 2024 Commercial Project Awards. It is a shortlisted project in two different categories of the 2024 Property Industry Awards and named as a finalist in the 2024 Interior Design Awards.

**The theatre was transformed into a high-spec performance space and important historic fabric – a raked timber floor, double-height arched windows, and timber trusses – preserved.** Andy Spain

# Community focus in public landscapes

***Of the People. By the People*.**
**The Community and Protection of Heritage Landscapes in Aotearoa. An Auckland Case Study.**
***By John P. Adam***

*Part one of a personal overview of several heritage themes related to understanding often under-represented historic public landscapes and their forgotten guardians.*

*Part two focusing on public garden design competitions will feature in a future issue.*

**Community**

A substantial report, A History of Auckland Central City Urban Parks, was commissioned in late 1999 by the late Brian Toy (1950-2002) of Auckland City's Community Planning Department. Brian wanted to know about the history of the public parks found in the urban core of Auckland city.

Six themes, including community, were agreed. One completed copy of the illustrated report was submitted then lost through ongoing staff restructuring. I retained the text version then edited a second version (without all the illustrations) and deposited several copies in Auckland Council's Corporate Library in 2012. The six themes I adopted were garden history, cultural landscapes, environmental history, urban design/planning, governance and 'social context' or community.

Some 15 public reserves were agreed.

When listening to newly elected politicians debating the Fast-track Bill, **community** seems to be a 'woke' word.

The Government appears to think that by passing a new bill they can avoid 'the community', which in any functioning democracy has always contested and challenged policies and decisions proposed for local public land use across diverse public open spaces.

This parks report was written in a pre digital age as a series of timelines for each park with brief summaries and conclusions deserving of wider awareness as my report was never formally published. There is also a new realisation today of a more diverse heritage of public lands. For example, considerable endowment lands for public institutions were provided and reserves called 'landing' or 'water reserves' for livestock that dominated the 19th century landscapes.

After World War 2, the nebulous term 'public open space' was adopted that diluted the grounded diversity of public lands.

Four critical political decisions for community access to public land were Royal Instructions, 1840; Reserves Act, 1854; and Public Domain Act, 1860. Associated with this imperial and colonial legislation was the common law where the community made use of public petitions and occasionally their actions were linked to High Court injunctions such as the recently discovered one found during research on Mt St John Domain in Epsom, Auckland. Here was a significant legal case that should have become case law after the Auckland High Court injunction taken by Justice Gillies for David L. Murdoch (1825-1911) vs. Joseph May (1816-1890) and others in 1879, which stopped a public stone quarry on the steep slopes of Mt St John Domain as storm-water run-off from quarrying threatened private lands.

**Wellington cemetery.** John Adam

The Auckland community has always contested the public form and structure the landscape would unfold back to or forward to. The volcanic cones, parks, cemeteries, the preservation of bush and birds, tree planting, public safety and the open space provision in the urban core and perimeter foreshore access run through the contested public record for more than 180 years.

It was a few self-appointed white men who individually participated, gifting trees to be planted in public places from the 1860s onwards, mainly influenced by contemporary scientific theories about climate.

These self-appointed men were soon replaced by a multitude of community-elected and -based societies representing various religions, class, female gender from the 1890s and some Māori values from the 1900s.

One such example was the Auckland Scenery Conservation Society [1899-1907], which adopted a report in October 1899 to "publish a list of trees suitable for planting" together with a "list of trees the planting of which it was desirous should be discontinued...".

Important Auckland environmental groups followed that included the Auckland Civic League [1910s-1950s]; Te Akarana Māori Association [1920 - 1950]; The Auckland Tree Planting Association - Tree Society (NZ), founded 1953; The (Royal) New Zealand Institute of Horticulture [1923-2024]; the Park and Recreation Association/ Recreation Aotearoa [1926-2024] and the Auckland Civic Trust. [1950-2024].

**Summation**

The legacy of community participation – often by school children – created the historic fabric across our public lands and when one understands these processes through time and space with public and bounding private lands intertwined one can begin to understand the unchanging communities' fears and passions reaching back over time.

[1] Other national examples included the construction of a building on Dunedin Town Belt that was ordered to be demolished.

[2] An injunction was obtained in October last [1878] to restrain defendants from excavating land upon his eastern boundary...". Law and Police. Supreme Court. 12 March, 1879. Before Justice Gillies. MURDOCH V MAY & OTHERS. The New Zealand Herald.

[3] Auckland Scenery Conservation Society. The New Zealand Herald, 3 October, 1899. P6. C8. ii. Anon. (1900) First Annual Report of the Auckland Scenery Conservation Society. Year ended 29 June, 1900. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington. 11p.

**Auckland Tree Society founder Winifred Huggins.** NZH

# Plea to read past eye-catching headlines

*By HNZPT chief executive Andrew Coleman*

It is a pleasure to contribute to The Voice of Heritage – a wonderful way of messaging all of the important people who particpate in heritage and contribute to the focus of Historic Places Aotearoa.

New Zealand is blessed with history and heritage and pleasingly there continues to be a broad fascination in what preceded our place and time. This fascination results in heritage having its fair share of stories that focus on conservation, preservation, protection and the risks associated with maintaining heritage values.

HNZPT Chief Executive Andrew Coleman.

The eye- catching part of a story will often be the headline and, alas, sometimes the headline does not encourage us to read past it. To encourage people to get past the headline, let's further explore the dilemma.

Mānawatia a Matariki – a headline that many of us are becoming very familiar with. Because Māori follow the Māori lunar calendar, not the European calendar, the dates for Matariki change every year. This year we celebrate Matariki from 29 June to 6 July, with a national public holiday on 28 June.

There is a lot to be learned about Matariki and Heritage This Month provides information for learning and understanding.

Matariki is an abbreviation of Ngā Mata o te Ariki Tāwhirimātea meaning The eyes of the God Tāwhirimātea.

It refers to a cluster of stars also known as Pleiades or the Seven Sisters.

Matariki is a cluster of stars that rises during mid-winter in New Zealand. Closely associated with harvesting, farming, and hunting, the brightness of the Matariki stars symbolised the abundance of the seasons to come.

The core value of Matariki is Mātauranga Māori, or the ancestral knowledge and wisdom passed down through generations of whanau/ families. With that in mind, Matariki celebrations focus on honouring the past – remembering those who have been lost over the last year and the plight of their Māori ancestors; enjoying the present – taking time to be content and value what we have; and looking forward to the future – the new year promises a new start, and the Matariki festival is a chance to look forward to the next chapter while valuing the past and the legacy the present is built upon.

There is a very strong heritage connection to Matariki, one that becomes clear from reading and learning past the headline.

Thankfully, there are many areas in New Zealand that invest in and manage heritage in a positive way that is then used for the betterment of their economy, social wellbeing and sense of community. Unfortunately, there are some areas that are 'misguided' on heritage and create negative headlines. Some recent examples, with the name of the area excluded, knowing that many of you will quickly identify where we are referring to, include:

Do we really need to heritage list any more of central ….?

Don't buy apartments in …. councillor says in wake of heritage building blaze.

The quagmire of protecting …. heritage buildings.

One must certainly read not just past the headline but through other opinions that are not part of the 'front page' to understand what is at play here. Those who truly think a significant cost blow-out on a category listed heritage adaptive re-use and rebuild is attributable to the heritage classification are misguided, just as the headline intends. The complete change in end-use and adaptation for that purpose are far more contributory to the cost blow out than any seismic strengthening of the heritage fabric.

Those who think simply changing a rule will mean an end plan (not about heritage) will miraculously materialise are also misguided.

There's a long-standing heritage question on a listed heritage building in the 'unnamed' location. The heritage building dilemma is the story beyond the headline. It's a classic demolition by neglect example, with ownership of over 10 years and no money spent on repair and maintenance. It's a shame those seeking to change the rule think there is merit in demolishing a heritage-listed apartment block to build, astonishingly, an apartment block.

How convenient the headlines are to satisfy the desire of the rule-makers. How misleading are the headlines when the truth is read, learned and understood.

Heritage places need care and protection, and it is people who will ensure this happens. If the effort is poor or minimal, the heritage will be lost. Unfortunately, there have been several recent examples where the effort has not been made.

Active and positive engagement provides the best chance for protection of heritage. When an effort is put in, improvements follow and awareness is increased.

I am pleased with the efforts of HPA and HNZPT to get headlines and stories aligned. We need to continue our efforts, encouraging others to read and understand the stories and places of heritage. It's in the body of the story that the work of heritage conservation, preservation and protection really comes to light.

I would like us all to make a plea – please read past the headline.

## Member Organisations of HPA

Cargill's Castle Trust, Dunedin
Historic Places Auckland – Tamaki Makaurau
Heritage Tairāwhiti
HP Hawke's Bay
Heritage Taranaki Inc
Whanganui Regional Heritage Trust
HP Manawatu-Horowhenua
HP Wellington
HP Canterbury
HP Mid Canterbury
Taonga Tū Heritage Bay of Plenty

## Associate Members

Art Deco Trust, Napier
Christchurch Civic Trust
Civic Trust Auckland
Remuera Heritage Inc
Patea Historical Society
Heritage Wairarapa
Kinder House Society
Point Chevalier Social Enterprise Trust
Sth Canterbury Historical Society
Timaru Civic Trust

# The Johnston legacy back in the spotlight

*By Dorothy Pilkington*

The March issue of Voice of Heritage reported on the splendid restoration of the Johnston & Co building on the corner of Taupo Quay and Victoria Avenue, Whanganui. Even a half century ago, when I was a regular passer-by, I remember that building as looking rather shabby and unloved. What an amazing transformation, and what determination and dedication by the owners.

The article drew attention to the status of the building as being "likely the only still-standing building of the once flourishing merchant firm." It is indeed true that the Wellington head offices (at right) and warehouse of Johnston and Co. on the corner of Panama and Featherston Streets have succumbed to progress.

The wooden building and the brick warehouse next door designed by architect Charles Tringham in 1873 served the company until it was taken over by another old Wellington firm, T and W Young, in the 1950s. However, a 1950s era photograph shows both buildings had apparently been given a "modernising facelift", at some time, probably in the 1920s.

The grand Wanganui branch building housed the major satellite to the Wellington head office. The firm owned a small fleet of coastal steamers, and shipping goods in and out of the Wanganui port meant that the branch was pivotal to the firm's operation. However, by 1917, the business had grown so much that a smaller branch was opened further north. That building, at 125 Princes Street in Hawera, still exists. After Johnston and Co was taken over by T and W Young, that firm continued to use the building as their Hawera branch, but more recently it has served as a restaurant, and currently houses an automotive business. The architect's plan for this building is held in the collection of Puke Ariki in New Plymouth, and according to the Hawera Heritage Inventory was probably drawn up by local firm, Duffill and Gibson.

But there's more than this to the Johnston family legacy of heritage buildings. When the company's founder John Johnston died on 16 November 1887, he owned four large North Island stations – Tamumu and Orua Wharo in Central Hawke's Bay, the 9,000 acre Brandon Hall near Bulls, and what is described in his will as "the 26,000 acre East Coast Mataikuna Station."

**Johnston & Co, Hawera branch.** Jacq Dwyer

**John Johnston**

He also owned a substantial number of town acres in the Newtown area of Wellington, along with land in Thorndon Quay, and a miscellany of town sections in Napier, Havelock North, Masterton, Foxton, and a big chunk of subdivisible land on the edge of Woodville. *The New Zealand Mail* described Johnston's estate as "a handsome fortune," and the press estimated his worth as being in the vicinity of £500,000.

Thus, even though their father's assets were divided among six siblings, his three sons and three daughters were each very well provided for. Notionally, Walter Woods Johnston had to buy Tamumu from the estate, and likewise Sydney Johnston had to buy **Orua Wharo**. But it was not too difficult to raise the necessary cash. Sydney Johnston recorded his financial arrangements in his diary on March 3, 1888: "Purchased Orua Wharo under terms of my father's will – paid for it by order on J and Co for £59,034, including £5,857 for 22000 sheep, 100 head of cattle, 30 horses and agricultural implements. Of this amount £26,000 was paid me by executors, £25,000 borrowed from my sister Emily on mortgage for 7 years at 6% … Balance on current account with J and Co (17,726 acres, 5/- a head sheep.)"

Sydney and Sophia Lambert had married on July 12, 1873 (His diary entry for that day comprises just one word – he notes laconically "married"). John Johnston commissioned Wellington architect Charles Tringham to design a home for the newly marrieds. No expense was spared and when completed in 1879 it was a spacious and elegant home. Nevertheless, in 1899 the Johnstons added another large wing. Orua Wharo homestead saw many large and happy social gatherings during the Johnstons' occupany, and for a brief period it was home to the Governor Lord Plunket, Lady Plunket and their family when they needed a country break. It was eventually gifted to the Roman Catholic church in 1965, and when it became too difficult to maintain and surplus to requirements, fell into disrepair. Thanks

**Sydney and Sophia Johnston**

**Continued on page 11**

# Grand houses linked through family

From page 10:

to two decades of dedicated rescue and restoration work by Peter and Dianne Harris since 2000 ,the house and garden "has regained its status as a showpiece of Hawke's Bay heritage" https://www.heritage.org.nz/list-details/1048/Oruawharo and the current owners Rob and Dr Erica Lauder and William Lauder and Bianca du Toit, have put their own mark on the successful business initiated by the Harrises – hosting events ranging from weddings to high tea.

John Johnston served as a member of the Legislative Council, and two of his sons served as members of the House of Representatives. Charles John Johnston was Member for Te Aro in Wellington (1881-87). He was then a Legislative Council Member from 1891 until his death in 1918, serving as Speaker for the last three years.

Charles Johnston

Walter Johnston

Walter Woods Johnston was Member for Manawatu (1871- mid-1884). During that entire period WW Johnston lived in Wellington. Having shown little interest in taking up residence in his electorate during his term, in 1888 he bought 1,200 acres of prime land at Awahuri, near Feilding, and in 1897 commissioned Frederick de Jersey Clere (then operating in Wellington in partnership as Clere, Richmond, and Fitzgerald) to design a home for him and his wife. The house was as large and luxurious as Orua Wharo and the Johnstons commuted regularly between this country estate and their Wellington home in Hobson Street until Walter Johnston's death in 1907. W W Johnston's wife, Cecilia continued to live at **Highden** after his death and commissioned Charles Tilleard Natusch to design the addition of a 14 bedroom wing. After her death in 1922, Highden was sold to the Society of Mary and until 1990 served as a novitiate. The house went through a period of neglect, changing hands several times, serving variously as a restaurant, events venue, and alternative medicine clinic.

Currently, the owners operate the property as Highden Manor Estate. According to the Tripadvisor site, repairs are under way and services –"welcoming guests for overnight stays, conferences, weddings, private functions, and retreats" are not being offered.

**Homewood**, in Karori, also owes its current form to the Johnston family.

The first European settler-era owner of this 300-acre property was Judge Chapman, but when he left Wellington in 1852, the Johnstons bought it as their family home. The registered owner was Henrietta, John Johnston's wife, and when she died in 1878, Walter Woods Johnston inherited the property. He sold Homewood to his brother Charles in 1888 after their father's death.

**Oruawharo, Hawke's Bay.** Alison Dangerfield, HNZPT

**Below: Homewood.** Wellington City Heritage

In 1903, Charles commissioned architect Joshua Charlesworth to design a substantial addition to the house, including a tower with crenellations, Corinthian columns, carved archways and corbels under the eaves.

Johnston served as Mayor of Wellington (1889-90). A newspaper report describes a lavish function he hosted at Homewood at that time, at which guests first gathered up the hill in the bush to enjoy the panoramic view, before repairing to the lawn and house below.

Charles Johnston died in 1918, and later owners of the house included the Sutherland family who established the Self Help Co-operative Ltd.

What became Johnston's Hill reserve in 1942 was part of the original property, as was the Hatton Street area, named for Henrietta Charlotte Johnston (née Hatton).

The house now stands in 2 acres and since 1958 has served as home of the British High Commissioner in New Zealand.

**Highden, Feilding.** Heritage New Zealand courtesy of owner Avril Druker, 2016.

# Thousands descend for Palmy heritage month

*By Linda Moore, Palmerston North City Libraries manager*

Palmerston North's Local History Week and Heritage Month in March saw thousands of attendees travel from surrounding regions.

Local History Week has been a cherished tradition in Palmerston North since 2008, offering countless opportunities to connect with the city's rich and diverse history. This year, the themed week was inspired by whenua. The whakatauki (proverb) *Whatungarongaro te tangata toitū te whenua* speaks to the permanence of whenua and the profound nature of the connections developed with the land.

An historic railcar took participants through Te Apiti Manawatū Gorge between Ashhurst and Woodville.

The week flowed into Heritage Month, an addition established last year, offering more than 80 diverse activities organised by around 50 local organisations and individuals. These included talks, walks, workshops, panel discussions, exhibitions and guided experiences highlighting the history and culture of Palmerston North and Manawatū region. A teacher-specific stream assisted kaiako, students and whānau with the Aotearoa NZ History Curriculum.

Heritage Month followed Waitangi Day (recognising the city's bicultural foundations with mana whenua, and Te Tiriti partner, Rangitāne ki Manawatū) and the Festival of Cultures, celebrating Palmerston North as a multicultural city, and was bookmarked by Anzac Day, acknowledging the city's defence heritage.

The programme began with the oldest Rangitāne marae in the rohe, Te Rangimarie, welcoming the community with a powhiri where people could learn about the wharenui and the whenua it stands upon.

Following hākari, Warren Warbrick (Tohunga Whakairo Rangitāne ki Manawatū) talked about the kaupapa of He Aho Tangata and recent projects involving "tāniko on the whenua".

Rangitāne perspectives on history were further explored in talks by Ruma Karaitiana (Rangitāne ki Manawatū), who shared Te Hirawanui Kaimokopuna's perspective into the sale of the Te Ahu a Turanga block in July 1864; Jonathan Procter discussed how environmental change shaped the cultural expressions of Rangitāne over the past 200 years. A discussion panel about the Te Ahu a Turanga: Manawatū Tararua Highway covered the partnership, the cultural context of surrounding whenua and how kaitiakitanga and mātauranga Māori are working in unison with western science on Te Ahu a Turanga.

One of the works of of internationally renowned, local sculptor Paul Dibble showcased in a survey exhibition at Te Manawa Art Gallery, Palmerston North.

People were encouraged to explore their own unique migration story through attending genealogy workshops. Individuals and whānau could start learning their Māori whakapapa with experienced genealogist Peter Te Rangi (Rangitāne ki Manawatū). Lucy Mackintosh, author of *Shifting Grounds: Deep Histories of Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland*, presented the Mina McKenzie memorial lecture. This was followed by a workshop aimed at assisting secondary school students to learn and think critically about local histories through museum collections, taonga and place.

Historian Val Burr explored Scandinavian settler stories, and Dr Tania Kopytko told stories of some of the 4000 World War 2 displaced persons homed at Pahīatua Camp.

Lieutenant colonel Dr Peter Wood presented on Sir Geoffrey Peren's lifelong association with the land in times of peace, war and civil emergencies, adding to the story of his contributions to agriculture through the Perendale sheep breed he pioneered.

Among the interesting histories about local businesses and organisations, Adrian Broad talked about the history of the Manawatū Standard during his nine years as general manager during which time computers replaced typewriters. Dr Fred Hirst gave a history of Awapuni Hospital, which opened in 1915 as a home for older people, closed in 1989, and is now a Rangitāne. urban marae, health hub and community centre.

Guided experiences included journeying through Te Apiti Manawatū Gorge on an historic rail car between Ashhurst and Woodville, exploring seven restored houses and "back of house" tours including The Regent Theatre.

Dom King, former archivist and history head at Palmerston North Boys High, hosted a tour of the school's Memorial Gallery and its school's archives, sharing how to set up, protect and promote school histories.

Iconic heritage locations opened their doors to the public including the Category 1 Palmerston North Electric Power Station.

Richard Shaw launched his book *The Unsettled*, which weaves Pākehā settler stories of colonisation and land confiscation with his own family story.

Look.See.Think.Feel allowed participants to view selected works from the wide ranging New Zealand art collection owned by the Te Manawa Art Society and housed in the painting store at the Te Manawa Art Gallery.

Also in the gallery was a survey exhibition of internationally renowned, local sculptor Paul Dibble, showcasing his career and reflecting on a sense of place and belonging in Aotearoa New Zealand.