

NEWSLETTER

No. 7. February 2014

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To join Historic Places Wellington or learn more about Historic Places Aotearoa, go to www.historicplacesaotearoa.org.nz

CONTACT US

Our email address is
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TRIPS AND EVENTS

Visit to Old Public Trust Building
Sunday 2nd March, 2014 2pm to 3pm
Further trips planned for April and May
Details will be advised

Visit to Old Public Trust Building

Sunday, 2 March 2014. 2 pm - 3 pm 131-135 Lambton Quay

The July 2013 earthquake damaged the Category 1 listed building to such an extent that the Body Corporate decided to sell the building. Late in 2013 it was sold to McKee Fehl, a company with a long tradition of bringing historic buildings into the modern world.

It is currently listed by the Wellington City Council as 'earthquake prone' and is yellow stickered (along with many other Wellington buildings which are being used every day). The ornate stone and brick Edwardian baroque style building on the corner of Lambton Quay and Stout St is believed to be New Zealand's first steel framed office building. It is also one of the few buildings that use Tonga Bay granite (in today's Abel Tasman National Park) as cladding.

The tour will meet at the main entrance on Lambton Quay at 2 pm. Please be on time, as once the tour has entered the building it will not be possible to join it. **Members Only Please.**

Hutt City Civic Centre



Hutt Town Hall. (Photo Steven Shadwell)

Controversy has been building since the Hutt City Council announced late last year its intention to demolish the Town Hall and adjacent Horticultural Hall. The intention is to replace them with a new facility sometimes called a convention centre.

The two halls were built in the 1950s as part of the new Lower Hutt civic centre. This centre was developed within Riddiford Park and comprised a fine group of Modernist buildings alongside the St James Church built a little earlier. The designers were

mostly prominent Hutt architects and the buildings are fine examples of the Modernist style reflecting design concepts of the time.

There has been widespread dismay at the Council's decision which shows scant regard for the qualities of the buildings and their contribution to the Hutt community over six decades. There was no consultation with the community before the decision, and because of the way the land is designated there is no opportunity for public submissions. The Council's decision lacked a solid economic analysis and there are doubts whether a convention centre in the Hutt Valley would be viable.



Hutt Horticultural Hall. (Photo Steven Shadwell)

The New Zealand Historic Places Trust and **Historic Places Wellington** have criticised the decision and have made representations to the Council. A group of Hutt architects has been working to develop an alternative scheme that would retain the halls and provide a flexible modern facility. A community group, Heart of the Hutt, has been formed and has developed its own scheme for redeveloping the civic centre while retaining existing buildings.

A public meeting to express opposition to demolishing the halls was held on 4 February. The meeting was organised by Heart of the Hutt and attracted over 100 people. Heart of the Hutt presented its scheme and contributions from the floor followed. There were arguments for and against keeping the halls but the overwhelming opinion for their retention was confirmed by an almost unanimous show of hands.

The Hutt architects group and Historic Places Trust have presented schemes to the Hutt City Council's project group. Both schemes would retain the two halls with changes to allow more flexible uses. These schemes would meet many of the Council's objectives, so we hope that the Council will seriously consider them.

If you would like to show your support for the halls, go to www.facebook.com/huttheart and have your say, or email [huttheart\(at\)gmail\(dot\)com](mailto:huttheart(at)gmail(dot)com).

Meeting with the Minister of Culture and Heritage

On 16 December the Chairman of Historic Places Wellington, **John Daniels**, the Vice-chairman, **Priscilla Williams**, and the Treasurer, **Peter Dowell**, met with the Minister for Culture and Heritage, the **Hon Chris Finlayson**. There were two main reasons why we requested this meeting. We felt that it was appropriate at this stage of HPW's development to talk to the Minister about our approach to heritage work and our plans for the future. We also wished to ask him about timing for the passage of the Heritage New Zealand bill.

Part of the meeting was spent in discussing the state of heritage buildings in and around the Wellington area. These included the Public Trust Building, the Wellesley Club, Upper Cuba St, St Mary of the Angels, the Monastery and in particular the two in which we have been particularly involved, namely the Harcourts Building and the Hutt Civic Centre. The Minister's knowledge of heritage architecture was evident, along with his concern for its retention where possible and the need for realistic compromises that would allow for commercial use of historic premises.

The Minister gave us assurances that the Heritage New Zealand Bill would be passed by the Parliament early in the New Year, possibly February. This would enable it to come into force by July 2014. We hope this will be possible. While we think the Bill still has some deficiencies, its early passage is desirable in order to clarify the future of the Government's policy on heritage issues and to avoid the continuing confusion on nomenclature. Under this legislation the name of **Historic Places Trust** will change to **Heritage New Zealand**.

The Minister commented positively on the submissions we had made on this Bill and hoped we would consider submitting one introduced that month about seismic strengthening of buildings, including those with heritage listings. He also invited us to return this year for a further meeting.

Historic Places Aotearoa

The annual general meeting of our national body **Historic Places Aotearoa (HPA)** was reported in the last Newsletter. As reported, the Executive has set up a working group to consider changes in the structure and operations of HPA. Our Chair **John Daniels** has been asked to prepare a discussion paper on these important issues. He will be presenting this to the working group this month.

We will keep members informed of developments on HPA's future.

U.S. Marines Hall, Titahi Bay



In Newsletter 5 we reported that **Porirua City Council** had withdrawn its application to demolish this hall until further consultations and investigations were carried out. The hall was constructed in 1942-43 as a recreation hall for **U.S. Marines**, and is a rare survivor from this important period. Community efforts have raised funds and material help to repair the hall. To help these efforts, HPW has offered a grant of \$1000 to the project.

Upper Hutt Guided Heritage Walk

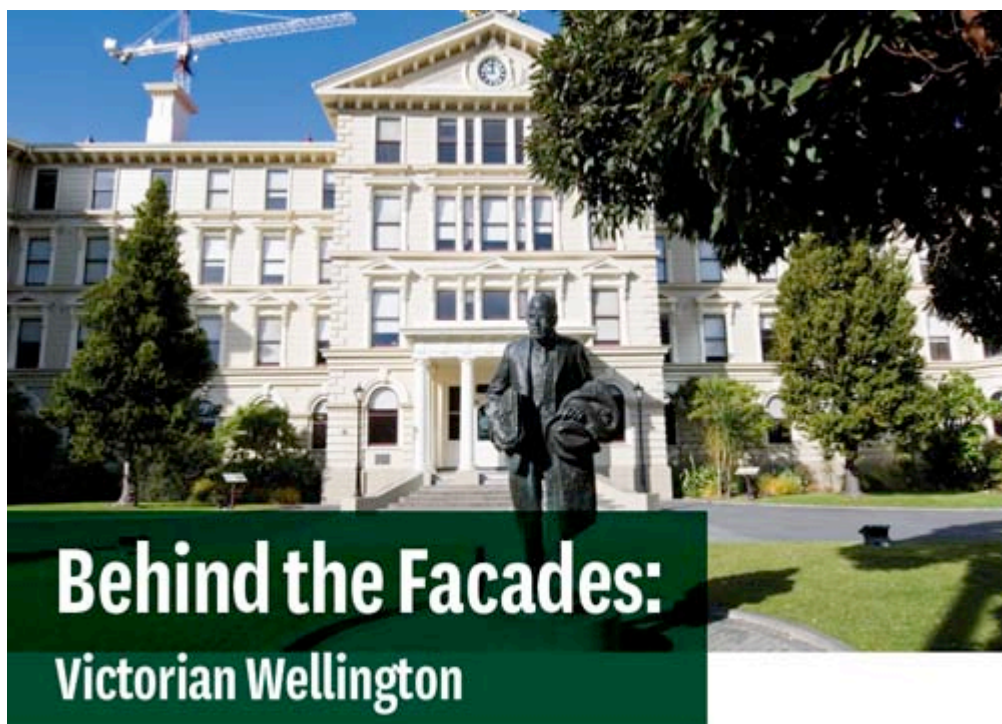
Paul Lambert (vice chair of Wellington Region Heritage Promotion Council and newly elected Upper Hutt City councillor) has organised a free guided heritage walk of central Upper Hutt, taking in Golder Cottage and the Blockhouse (donations appreciated at both venues). He will highlight the Benge and Pratt fire and explosion of 29 March 1914 which resulted in eight deaths.

This walk is on **Sunday 23 March. Meet Limelight Cafe, Expressions, 1.30 pm.**
For bookings T: 04 526 3660 or E: spellbound(at)extra(dot)co(dot)nz..

Wallaceville Church – Update

In the last newsletter mention was made of the impending sale of the old **Wallaceville Presbyterian Church** and its lack of heritage protection. Since then the news has been more promising with the new owners stating they will keep it in its present state. To quote them “we all agree it is a beautiful building in a lovely spot” – good news indeed.

Behind the Facades: Victorian Wellington – Lectures and Walking Tour



Our Victorian buildings have value today, not just because of a different aesthetic, but because of what they tell us about how we came to be where we are now and the people who helped get us here.

This lecture series and walking tour aim to enhance your appreciation of Wellington’s remaining Victorian buildings by going behind their facades to set them in their original context and bring them to life.

Joanna Newman is a consultant in archives and records management and the Convenor of the Mount Victoria Historical Society.

Lectures: 6pm–8pm, Mondays 3 to 24 March

Walking tour: 10am–12pm, Saturday 29 March

Fee: \$140 (Early Bird Fee: \$126)

For further information or to enrol visit
www.victoria.ac.nz/conted

