



HISTORIC PLACES WELLINGTON INC  
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# Newsletter

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## EVENTS (See page 4 for details)

- Kapiti US Marines Trust Memorial Day on 30 May
- Course on Historic Buildings starting 9 June
- Visit to the Italian Residence on 25 June

## New Committee Members

We are pleased to welcome to the Committee two additional members. **Christina Mackay** is Senior Lecturer - Interior Architecture at the School of Architecture, Victoria University. Holding degrees from Auckland and Victoria Universities, Christina is a registered architect and her current research interests include understanding and designing built environment for protection against UV over-exposure and dynamics of building alteration. Christina's research has included tracking alterations of the Family Hotel in Otaki against 130 years of liquor licencing legislation and case studies of changes in Wellington villas. Analysis has revealed common patterns of villa alteration and a need for better design and building craft resources (and capability) for the on-going care of our heritage houses.

**Dr Ben Schrader** is a Wellington based freelance historian who specializes and publishes in the fields of urban history and the history of the built environment. His work experience is diverse: from university teaching, to writing contract histories and heritage reports, to working on large public history projects like the 'New Zealand Historical Atlas' and 'Te Ara – the online Encyclopaedia of New Zealand'. His last major book was 'We Call it Home: A History of State Housing in New Zealand', a finalist in the 2006 Montana Book Awards. A new book on the history of colonial city life in New Zealand, titled 'The Big Smoke: New Zealand Cities 1840-1920', will be published by Bridget Williams Books this October.

## WCC Heritage Work

A recent meeting with the WCC heritage team of three senior heritage advisers has updated us on their current work. Priority is given to advising on resource consents, which is a statutory role. A current task is populating a heritage database – when finished this will give useful heritage information that had been previously online. In the meantime queries about particular heritage buildings can be obtained by emailing the heritage team at [heritage@wcc.govt.nz](mailto:heritage@wcc.govt.nz)

The heritage advisers also administer the Built Heritage Incentive Fund (BHIF), which has three funding rounds a year. The BHIF was a key initiative of the Wellington Heritage Policy 2010 whereby owners of heritage properties could apply for financial assistance. The Council has decided to focus on remedying earthquake prone features or preparing conservation plans and initial engineer reports. In the last funding round 11 properties received funding grants. When this list was released Councillor Iona Pannett, the Council's Buildings Portfolio Leader and a strong supporter of heritage buildings, commented: "If we've learned one thing from the past, losing heritage landmarks and buildings can be detrimental to a community's identity, culture, and nationhood – which is why we will continue to ensure that our heritage value never diminishes."

One of the buildings to receive funding is the **former Tramway Hotel**, also known as the Adelaide Hotel, at 114 Adelaide Road. Built in 1899 and with a commanding presence on a corner site, it is on the WCC heritage list but not on the one maintained by Heritage New Zealand. This building has been red-stickered for a long time and it appeared likely to be heading for demolition. It is welcome news that the new owner has a more positive approach and the BHIF grant of \$30,000 will fund seismic assessment and design.



Another building to receive a grant in this round is the **former Albemarle Hotel** at 59 Ghuznee Street. Also on the Council's heritage list, this very distinctive building has a Category 2 listing with Heritage New Zealand. It was designed by James Bennie and built in 1906. The \$60,000 grant from the BHIF gives hope that this forlorn building will soon have a much more elegant appearance and make a more positive contribution to the streetscape.

An earlier recipient of a BHIF grant was the former **St James Presbyterian church** on Adelaide Rd, near the hospital. This was the first Presbyterian church in Newtown, designed by Wellington architects McKay and MacGregor and constructed towards the end of the 19th century. The Heritage New Zealand listing notes that the building is a good representative example in timber of Classical motifs usually seen in masonry buildings.

Stylistically it has been described as Italian Romanesque, but includes a mixture of Classical and Gothic elements, showing a 'colonial attitude more concerned with effect than pedantic correctness'. The tower with its domed roof and latticed openings to the bell chamber looks particularly Italian at first glance, but the columns beside the openings have neither capitals nor bases. This interesting building has been sensitively adapted for apartments by Novak Middleton Architects and the first



homes were put on the market recently. Where possible the timber architectural elements have been preserved both on the exterior and interior. This is a good example of constructive re-use for a large building no longer required for its original purpose.

The largest grant given under the BHIF has been \$400,000 given recently to St Mary of the Angels, presumably not only in recognition of its heritage importance but also to its central and dominating position in the city landscape. Seismic strengthening of this building is now well underway.

## **Some Intractable Issues**

While the above buildings show signs of progress, there are some important heritage buildings in Wellington city that remain closed because of earthquake concerns and on which progress is glacial at best. Among these are **Erskine College and chapel** in Island Bay – privately owned, the **Town Hall** – owned by WCC, **Turnbull House** in Bowen Street – owned by the Department of Conservation and the **former GHQ Building** on the corner of Buckle and Taranaki Street – owned by the NZ Defence Force. Our committee continues to monitor these projects and engage on occasion with the owners when it seems constructive to do so.

One building in the news recently is the **Gordon Wilson complex** which has been on the WCC heritage list but not listed by Heritage New Zealand. Built in the 1950s on The Terrace at the corner of Ghuznee Street, this was home to some 130 clients of Housing NZ. The complex was heritage-listed by the city because it represented a fine example of maisonette style apartments of that era and was the last of a line of important high rise social housing projects built by the state. However the complex has been empty since 2012 because of earthquake concerns and sold recently to Victoria University.

The City Council voted this month by a significant majority to rezone the land from "Inner Residential Area" to "Institutional Precinct" as part of Victoria University and to remove the heritage listing. The debate around this decision has covered not only the heritage values of the building but also the actual state of its structure, the value of social housing and the extent of "university-creep". Historic Places Wellington did not make a submission but some members were more actively involved. Victoria University is expected to demolish the complex in order to create a pedestrian route between its main campus and the city, but the Council's decision is subject to appeal.

## **Visit to Crofton on 13 March**

40 members of HPW enjoyed a fascinating afternoon at Crofton, built in Ngaio in 1857 by Sir William Fox, four times Premier of New Zealand. Our previous newsletter commented on its special significance as one of the oldest surviving houses in Wellington and indeed in New Zealand. It is also of historical importance because of its link with Fox and its subsequent use in the 1860s as a Church of England grammar school. Built in a simple Gothic Revival style, a notable internal feature is its u-shaped open-well staircase. While photos of Crofton and more information are available on our website and on Heritage NZ's listing, we cannot resist showing you the wonderful afternoon tea provided to us by owner Margaret Domett. Members were also impressed by the extent of original features that have survived and been preserved by the owners as well as some fascinating personal collections by the Dometts. If you missed out on this tour and are interested in exploring Crofton, Margaret plans to offer tours of the house by appointment to interested groups.

Contact Margaret Domett via [www.crofton.co.nz](http://www.crofton.co.nz)





The Wonderful Afternoon Tea at Crofton



Crofton Interior

## **Forthcoming Events**

**Kapiti US Marines Trust.** The Trust is inviting members to the Memorial Day Ceremony to be held on Monday 30 May at 10:00 am at the US Memorial in Queen Elizabeth Park. After the Memorial Day Service, attendees are invited to the adjacent Whareroa Farm for the blessing and opening of the Camp Mackay Trail, one of the Trust's two projects for 2016. This will take place at 11:30am. Morning tea at Fiducia House, Queen Elizabeth Park, will follow this ceremony.

**Wellington's Historic Buildings.** An evening class starts on 9 June that looks at how Wellington has developed since 1840 and some of its key historic buildings. This is a well-illustrated course running over four weeks from 5:30 to 7:30pm and will be followed by an optional walk around the CBD to look at some of the buildings discussed. The tutor is Vivienne Morrell who worked at Heritage New Zealand for a few years researching Wellington buildings and is a committee member of HPW. For more information or to register visit the Wellington High School website: [www.cecwellington.ac.nz/courses/1142-city-stories-wellingtons-architectural-heritage](http://www.cecwellington.ac.nz/courses/1142-city-stories-wellingtons-architectural-heritage)

**Visit to the Italian Residence, Wadestown.** The Italian Ambassador has generously agreed to a visit from members on Saturday 25 June at 11am. This is for a restricted number so if you are interested, please contact Vivienne Morrell as soon as possible at [vivmoeden@gmail.com](mailto:vivmoeden@gmail.com) **Members only**. It is possible that another building may be added to this tour, so we shall inform members later about this.

The Residence, built in 1877, was designed by well-known architect Thomas Turnbull as his own house. It is a Category 2 listed building by Heritage NZ. Subsequent owners sold off some land, divided the house into two flats and rented them out until 1961 when the property was purchased by the Italian Government. The house is a two-storey double bay villa, Italianate in design. Thomas Turnbull (1824–1907) was an important architect in mid to late 19th century New Zealand. Among his most important buildings were the Willis Street churches of St Peter (1879) and St John (1885), the former National Mutual Building (1883–84), the General Assembly Library at Parliament (1899) and the former Bank of New Zealand Head Office (1901), all in Wellington and registered Category 1 historic places.