



HISTORIC PLACES WELLINGTON INC  
PO BOX 12426 THORNDON WELLINGTON 6144

# NEWSLETTER

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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)

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## EVENTS (See page 4 for details)

**27 November. Wairarapa Region Heritage Celebration at Longwood.**

**2 December. Symposium on 1970s Architecture.**

## Erskine College Buildings in Island Bay

Members will be well aware of the long saga over the preservation of the Erskine College buildings and that demolition by neglect is a real threat. At risk is both the chapel and the main college block. In recent news reports, an impression was given that a satisfactory solution had been reached with the developer. Unfortunately this is not true. There is agreement about keeping the chapel but the main block is still facing threat of demolition. Historic Places Wellington wrote to the Wellington City Council on this issue at the beginning of November and the substantial part of our letter is given below.

*“Historic Places Wellington is an incorporated society whose objectives are the protection and conservation of historic sites and buildings in the Wellington region. We have been concerned for many years about the deteriorating state of the buildings on the Erskine site, and have advocated for their proper maintenance and preservation. We have sought discussions with the current owner although our approaches have brought a limited response only.*

*You will be aware that the heritage buildings on the site have Category One listed status under the Heritage New Zealand Act. The significance of the buildings will have been well represented to you by Heritage New Zealand so we will not go over that ground again here. We do, however, wish to emphasise our view that, in accordance with the Category One listing, both the former classroom block and the chapel must be retained in any redevelopment of the site. We are most concerned about the condition of these buildings which have not been maintained for many years. We urge the Council to seek an outcome, acceptable to all parties that will result in a socially valuable development with the heritage buildings as its centrepiece.*

*The original classroom block would seem to lend itself to conversion to apartment housing, in keeping with the site's housing designation. Looking wider, a boutique hotel could also be an attractive use.*

*Historic Places Wellington is aware of the complexities involved in this site. The Special Housing Area status, and the role of the Save Erskine College Trust as a Heritage Protection Authority, create challenges in bringing parties together to achieve an agreed solution. We urge the Council to use its best endeavours to reach a solution that fully respects heritage values."*



Other members may similarly wish to advocate for the retention of this significant heritage property, either by contacting the Wellington City Council or local media.

This photograph shows part of the main college block, taken in 2015 during an inspection visit there by some HPW committee members.

### **ICOMOS NZ Conference, 29-30 October 2016, Wellington**

During the last weekend of October about 40 people gathered in Cuba Street's Thistle Hall for the annual conference of ICOMOS NZ. (ICOMOS is the International Council on Monuments and Sites). The delegates were a mix of archaeologists, planners, architects, policy wonks and historians. Speakers focused on diverse aspects of heritage practice: Paul Thomas examined the restoration and revival of Reefton's Victorian-era commercial buildings; Kevin Jones revealed some of the objects he uncovered – including piles of the original church – during a dig at St Mary of the Angels, and Vanessa Tanner explained how a course she recently attended on disaster risk management of cultural heritage in Japan will inform her work at the Wellington City Council. Other topics included new developments in Maori heritage at Heritage New Zealand, the Kawarau Falls Dam Bridge, and the rebuilding of Christchurch's New Regent Street.

On Sunday morning Ian Bowman and Ben Schrader (HPW Committee member) led a bus tour to Lower Hutt's CBD to look at the city's Modernist architecture, such as St James' Church, the Town Hall and Library. The tour then went onto Hillary Court and the state housing suburb of Naenae, recognised as the best example of garden city planning in New Zealand. Ian and Ben noted that unsympathetic attitudes towards built heritage within the local council pose a serious threat to Hutt Modernism and both expressed the hope that this would change before these places are lost forever. It was a stimulating and sociable conference. A notable feature was the high number of younger delegates in their 20s and 30s, dispelling any notion that heritage issues only appeal to older generations.

For further information about ICOMOS and to join ICOMOS NZ go to [www.icomos.org.nz/](http://www.icomos.org.nz/)

## **Demolition ball looms over Basin Reserve's Museum Stand**

Built in 1924, the Museum Stand is a staple of the Basin Reserve's cricket heritage. The New Zealand Heritage List Category 2 building was designed and built by the City Engineer's Department of the Wellington City Council and remains in largely original condition. Originally used as members stand and player changing rooms, it has more recently hosted the New Zealand Cricket Museum. The stand is the oldest stand at the ground. However, the Council's plan to redevelop Basin Reserve has the demolition ball looming over its future.

In 2012, the Museum Stand was 'yellow-stickered', meaning that it was assessed by the Council to be earthquake prone, giving the owner 15 years to strengthen or demolish the building. As a result, the Museum Stand seating area was closed to the public in 2012. The Council estimated strengthening costs to be \$5-8 million. The proposed \$21 million Basin Reserve redevelopment has indicated replacing the 1924 stand with a tiered embankment area that would include a playground, trees, park seating, and public toilets. An architect's drawing of this is included below on the right. The wider Basin redevelopment includes installing new floodlights, space for temporary seating for large events, and an upgrade of the existing RA Vance Stand.

Historic Places Wellington gave feedback in September 2016 supporting the retention of the Museum Stand in the development of the concept designs. Formal public submissions will be held in early 2017. Historic Places Wellington will also formally submit then.

For more information, please refer to: <http://redevelopthebasin.org.nz/>



*Museum Stand, English cricket team at the Basin Reserve, Wellington 1951.*

*Evening Post newspaper. Ref: 114/277/01-G. Alexander Turnbull Library*



*Source: Basin Reserve Master Plan*

## **Recommended Reading: *The Big Smoke***

HPW Committee member Ben Schrader's book *The Big Smoke: New Zealand Cities 1840-1920* was launched at Unity Books in October. It is the first book to examine why colonists settled in cities and explores the society and culture they created. The built environment features prominently in the book and it includes structures that HPW members will be both familiar and unfamiliar with. The *Listener* reviewer Chris Moore called it a 'lively, absorbing'... and 'important book' (12 Nov 2016). It's available at most bookstores or online through Bridget Williams Books (\$60).

## **Historic Places Aotearoa meets in Napier**

Historic Places Aotearoa is the national body representing some regional heritage societies. Historic Places Wellington is a member and is represented on the national executive by Nigel Isaacs. This year the meeting was held in Napier and was accompanied by other related events. Our 2016 delegate was John Daniels, in place of Nigel Isaacs, who is out of the country for some months. Committee member Felicity Wong also attended.

The day began with the annual meeting which dealt with formalities. The Executive was re-elected mostly as before, a budget approved, and the levy paid by member societies approved unchanged. The levy is based on membership numbers, and is set at a third of subscriptions. Historic Places Wellington is the largest funder of Historic Places Aotearoa, followed by Historic Places Hawkes Bay. Delegates of both societies expressed disappointment that HPA had not been able to attract more societies to join its ranks, thus spreading costs over a larger base. HPW has asked that this be made a priority for the coming year.

The meeting then heard addresses from Hon Craig Foss who stood in for the Minister of Arts, Culture and Heritage Maggie Barry, and from Jacinda Ardern, Labour's heritage spokesperson. Both were supportive of HPA's aims and discussed ways in which heritage protection might be improved. Jacinda Ardern threw out a number of promising ideas which would be considered if her party were in government.

The afternoon was taken up by a plenary workshop session looking at issues and future priorities for HPA. This was attended by delegates and a good turnout of Hawkes Bay members. The discussions ranged over what HPA was currently doing well, and what should be priorities for the future. The results of the workshop are being collated and will be considered by the Executive during next year.

After the meeting attendees went on a walking tour of central Napier, conducted by guides from the Napier Art Deco Trust. The following morning there was a bus tour of historic places in the wider area. This was compered by Art Deco personality John Cocking, better known in his persona of man-about-town Bertie.

## **Forthcoming Events**

**Sunday 27 November. A celebration of the Wairarapa Region's heritage.** Heritage NZ members will have already seen a notice of this event to be held from 10am to 3.30pm at Longwood, Featherston, a Category 1 heritage property. It promises to be a fascinating day with speakers on key parts of Wairarapa's history and heritage as well as an opportunity to view this magnificent privately-owned heritage property. A charge of \$30 a head will also cover lunch. For more information contact the HNZ's Central Region Office. **Deadline for RSVPs is Friday 18 November.**

**Friday 2nd December. One Day Symposium.** Link: ["all the appearances of being innovative": New Zealand architecture in the 1970s: a one day symposium](#) held under the auspices of the Centre for Building Performance Research, Victoria University, Wellington. This annual symposium will be held at Victoria University – for abstracts, the programme, and to register, click the above link. A few papers have a Wellington focus.