Historic Places Wellington’s AGM

Our recent AGM on 28 August was notable for adopting some major changes to our Rules. These are needed to make HPA a fully independent society, which will be affiliated to our national body Historic Places Aotearoa. The changes go hand in hand with changes to HPA’s Rules, which are referred to below.

The major change for members will be that all membership matters will be devolved to regional societies. Members will in future belong to HPW instead of HPA. The committee is planning to make the changeover as smooth as possible, as explained in the item on membership which follows. For HPW the formal changeover will take place in December.

The AGM elected the following committee: Deborah Cranko, John Daniels, Peter Dowell, Nigel Isaacs, Ian Jolly, Tania Warburton and Priscilla Williams. The meeting finished with an illustrated talk by archaeologist Mary O’Keeffe on “Digging the Dirt – Wellington Archaeology”. Mary’s fascinating and entertaining presentation brought alive the hidden aspect of our past revealed through archaeology.

In accordance with the Rules, the Committee subsequently elected the following officers:

Peter Dowell – Chairman  Priscilla Williams – Vice Chairman
John Daniels – Treasurer  Ian Jolly – Membership and Minutes Secretary

Historic Places Aotearoa’s AGM

HPA’s AGM was held in Wellington on Saturday 8 November. HPW’s voting delegate was Priscilla Williams, and other committee members present were Deborah Cranko and John Daniels, who is a member of the HPA Executive. The most important business of the meeting was the adoption of changes to the Rules of HPA to implement the structural changes agreed earlier and summarised in the last Newsletter. To recapitulate, these are:

- HPA to deal only with national heritage issues such as policy and legislation
- Individual membership to be devolved to regional societies which will deal with all membership matters
- HPA to adopt a federal structure with the national body made up of representatives of affiliated regional societies
- Membership of HPA to be opened up to other existing bodies with heritage-related aims
- Regional societies to pay a levy, on a basis to be agreed, to fund HPA national activities.
The changed membership arrangements will result in members belonging to Historic Places Wellington instead of Historic Places Aotearoa. HPA has a fair amount of work ahead to implement these changes, particularly in attracting further heritage bodies to join the national organisation. The aim is to achieve a stronger heritage voice and presence on the national scene. We will keep members informed about progress.

Also at the AGM, the founding President of HPA, Anna Crighton, retired and was succeeded by James Blackburne, Chair of Historic Places Tairawhiti (Gisborne). We look forward to working with James in his new role.

Important Notice on Membership

As at 1 January 2015 Historic Places Wellington will be taking over our membership functions, in respect of those members living in the Wellington region, from the national body, Historic Places Aotearoa. We will also be moving to a common annual membership renewal date of 1 July.

How will things change for you, our members? Well, apart from a more efficient service:

- Membership renewal notices and reminders will be sent out by HPW.
- You will pay your membership subscription directly to HPW, either by cheque or bank deposit.
- Changes of address, new memberships etc will be processed by HPW.

In order to progress to the common annual membership renewal date of 1 July the committee has agreed to the following transitional arrangements:

- Members whose subscription is due for renewal during the remainder of 2014 and who are yet to renew will be billed by HPW at the beginning of January 2015 for six months membership to take them up to 30 June 2015, then to be billed annually from 1 July of that year.
- Members normally due to renew in the first six months of 2015 – Renewals deferred until 1 July 2015 then billed annually.

While we have endeavoured to come up with an arrangement that will benefit the great majority of our members there may be some who feel disadvantaged by it. If you feel you fall into that category then we will happily work with you on a case by case basis to come up with an equitable solution.

PAYPAL – For those of you who have previously paid your subscription via Paypal, it has been decided that due to many difficulties encountered with this system it is not practical to offer it as a payment option from 1 January 2015. Members who have chosen to set up this payment option will need to ensure they cancel their Paypal authority before 1 January, otherwise future payments may not be able to be credited against your HPW membership. If you experience difficulty cancelling your current Paypal authority please contact info@historicplacesaotearoa.org.nz for assistance.

Harcourts Building

It is very pleasing to be able to report that the Environment Court has once again declined consent to demolish this Category One registered building. This second hearing by the Court followed an appeal by the owner to the High Court, which referred the case back to the Environment Court for a rehearing.

The High Court asked that matters of public safety, and whether there were reasonable grounds for declining consent, be given further consideration.

The Court found the most significant issues to be:

(a) The safety of the public
(b) The risk of damage to buildings that are in close proximity to the Harcourts Building
(c) Public interest in preserving heritage buildings
(d) The private financial and property interests of owners of heritage buildings.

The Court had heard extensive evidence on these issues, and issued a comprehensive decision. Two quotes from the conclusion of the Court’s decision sum up its findings;
“To consent to demolition when there is a fair, appropriate, balanced and reasonable alternative to repair would not be a proper exercise of our discretion. We acknowledge the clear public risks and risks to the [adjoining] HSBC Building. However, there are alternatives to demolition.”

This case is a landmark one in relation to heritage buildings with seismic deficiencies, so the decision is a great encouragement. We congratulate Heritage New Zealand, which has stayed the course and committed very substantial resources to the case.

We hope that the owner Mark Dunajtschik will now consider selling the building to one of the parties known to be interested in carrying out strengthening. On the other hand, the risk remains that he will consider another appeal to the High Court on points of law.

**Former GHQ Defence Building**

Our previous newsletter described the state of this listed building at the corner of Buckle and Taranaki Streets and its importance in the context of the Mt Cook military history. It is the one crucial element in the plans for the National Memorial Park on Buckle Street where a decision is still awaited and in the meantime its derelict state and rusting roof stands out amid the progress on the Park, due to be opened in April next year.

HPW wrote to the Minister of Defence, Hon Gerry Brownlee at the end of October to ask his assistance in ensuring this important part of Wellington’s heritage is preserved, that its exterior is improved prior to the opening of the Memorial Park and that plans are made to restore it back to use. A copy of the letter was sent to Hon Maggie Barry, Minister for the Arts, Culture and Heritage. We have yet to receive a substantive reply from either Minister.

In the meantime talks are on-going among Government agencies involved and also within the wider community. One organisation which has been particularly pro-active in arguing for the building’s preservation and conservation is the Wellington Civic Trust. Because of the building’s current state, it is difficult for the general public to understand why it has been given a Category 2 status on the heritage list so readers of this newsletter might wish to look at details about it on the Heritage New Zealand List (Registration # 7518).

**Recent Registration Proposals**

HPW is among those stake holders consulted about new registration proposals for the Heritage List. The Freyberg Pool, Oriental Parade, Wellington, is under consideration for Category 1 status on the List. The HPW Committee has supported this recommendation, both for the quality of its architecture and its importance as a landmark structure on the Wellington waterfront. The proposal is an important reminder that built heritage not only includes the Victorian, Edwardian and Art Deco structures but also the subsequent modern movements.

Currently under consideration by the Committee is a proposal for the Featherston Military Camp in the Wairarapa to be listed as a Category 1 historic place. This Camp is unusual as being associated with both World Wars; during the first one it was a large military training camp and during the second a prisoner of war camp. It is particularly remembered as the location of the death of 48 Japanese prisoners of war in 1943 following a prison riot. Details about the camp and the proposal to register it are on the Heritage New Zealand website. If any HPW members would like to provide input into this process, could you please contact a member of the Committee by 22 November.

**Some Heritage Snippets**

Ann Neill, the General Manager of Heritage New Zealand’s regional office, has recently resigned to move north. We should like to acknowledge our gratitude for her hard work, especially on the Harcourts building. David Watt is the acting General Manager until a new appointment is announced.

Approval has been given for the Bolton Street Memorial Park, Wellington’s heritage cemetery, to change its name back to Bolton Street Cemetery. While this reflects common usage and more aptly describes what it is, the change will avoid confusion with the National Memorial Park due to open in April 2015.
Porirua City Council has given the community a further opportunity to have a say on the future of the Titahi Bay Marines Hall, a survivor of the World War 2 US Marines era. HPW has made a submission in favour of retaining the hall. The future of the building is far from assured but there is strong community support for it.

St Peter’s Anglican Church on Willis Street has a full set of 8 bells but no-one alive has ever heard them rung as they were designed to be heard. After their installation in 1879, it was quickly realised that the tower construction could not handle peeling which is “full-circle” ringing. This year the church has reinstated the practice of “chiming” the bells on Sundays but is also investigating, with the help of Canterbury University’s School of Engineering, the possibility of strengthening the tower so that these bells can after 135 years finally be peeled.

Trips and Events

Symposium on 1840s Architecture
On Friday 5 December the Centre for Building Performance Research, VUW School of Architecture, will be holding its annual one day symposium on a decade of New Zealand architecture. This year the decade featured is the 1840s, billed as “A massive colonial experiment”. 15 papers will be presented on a wide range of topics over an important period in our history which saw the beginnings of British rule and European settlement. Registration is due by 29 November and the cost of $60 is payable on the day. To register, visit http://www.victoria.ac.nz/architecture/centres/cbpr/conferences/a-massive-colonial-experiment-new-zealand-architecture-in-the-1840s or ring The School of Architecture.

Waterfront walk with Michael Kelly
On Sunday 1 February HPW has arranged for a guided walk along the Wellington waterfront looking at the wharf buildings and other notable landmarks. As numbers are limited to 25, this is for members only. To register, please ring John Daniels on 938 7971. It will start at 1.30 pm at the north side of Shed 21, opposite the Railway Station. It will take approximately 2 hours, maybe a bit longer.

The route followed will be from Shed 21 along the edge of the harbour to the Clyde Quay boat sheds/Freyberg Pool. Included will be: The city's remaining collection of historic brick and timber wharf sheds, the two historic rowing clubs, reclamations and culverts, the Odlins/Free Ambulance/Shed 22 collection, sculptures, the Hikitea, Te Papa, Herd St Post Office building, the revamped Overseas and Passenger Terminal, Clyde Quay Boat Harbour and Freyberg Pool.

Michael Kelly is an historian who specialises in historic heritage. A self-employed consultant since 1997, he has worked for most of the country's major heritage agencies. A born and bred Wellingtonian, Michael has a particular knowledge of and love for Wellington's history and heritage and has written a number of heritage trails for the Wellington City Council. He regularly conducts walking tours in the city and elsewhere.

Walk around Seddon’s State Houses
This walk was mentioned in our previous letter as likely to take place on 2 November. It has been postponed until March 2015 and details about it will be provided in our February newsletter.

Some More Wharf Buildings
The February walk does not cover the buildings north of Shed 21 as this would require too much time. Should you wish to explore that area on your own, two buildings worth looking at are shown below. As a guide to finding the buildings, do you know that they are numbered starting from Queens Wharf, with the uneven numbers to the North and even numbers to the South?