HPW in the Digital Age

HPW now has its own website (www.historicplaceswellington.org) and also a facebook page (www.facebook.com/historicplaceswellington). New items are added reasonably often and members are encouraged to look at them regularly for general information or news items that might be of interest. Even if you are not on facebook you can still look at the page. All issues of our newsletters are on the website and on the ‘Advocacy’ page you can see what buildings HPW has been taking an interest in. And you will find heaps of photos of heritage buildings within the Wellington Region.

If any members have suggestions or items that might be useful to add to either the website or facebook you can contact us either via the ‘contact us’ page on the website or email committee member Vivienne Morrell at vivmoeden@gmail.com

Committee Resignations

It is with regret that we have received two resignations from the Committee, namely Tania Warburton and Ian Jolly, both of whom have had to step down due to other obligations. It is difficult, when so many are under time pressure, to find people who are able to give time voluntarily even for causes that they strongly support. Our thanks to Heather Nelson for taking over the membership list and continuing to “broadcast” our emails. We should love to hear from anyone who could help us with the organisation of trips or any other heritage matters.

Great War heritage in Wellington

Memorials of World War One have been spruced up around New Zealand for the ANZAC Centenary remembrance but Wellington has surely benefitted the most. At the northern end of the city is the 1932 Citizens War Memorial, more usually known as the Cenotaph, which was designed by Grierson, Aimer and Draffin and surmounted by a striking equestrian statue by Richard Gross. The space around the cenotaph has been opened up and it now has a formal connection to the adjacent Parliament Buildings through a sweeping staircase. These changes have added considerably to its architectural presence.
But the most exciting enhancement of Wellington’s commemorative heritage is the new Memorial Park, Pukeahu, at the southern end of the inner city. This large space now provides expansive views of the beautiful Art Deco National War Memorial Carillon and the elegant former museum building behind it, in stripped Classical style, both designed by Gummer and Ford in the 1930s. The new Australian memorial complements these buildings at the northern end of the park. The former Art Gallery and Museum, now part of Massey University, is currently hosting a Great War exhibition and thus the public currently has ready access to one of Wellington’s grandest heritage buildings.

Our concern continues to centre on the Western side of the park, namely the former GHQ Building on the corner of Buckle and Taranaki Streets. We are grateful to the work by the Defence Services in cleaning up this building and would particularly like to compliment them and the Minister for the imaginative idea of putting in the boarded up windows some of the so-called “Berry Boys” – photographs taken by the Berry & Co photography studio of around 120 Kiwi soldiers before they left New Zealand to fight in the war. These glass negatives are held by Te Papa. It is now easy to appreciate the building’s aesthetic contribution to the memorial area and it is particularly sad that we still have no confirmation from either the Minister of Defence or the Minister for Culture and Heritage that this listed building will not be destroyed.

We hope all members have managed to obtain a copy of the booklet “World War I Heritage Trail – Wellington’s Parades and Places” published by the Wellington City Council assisted by the Ministry for Culture and Heritage. This informative and attractively produced booklet, available free from libraries, covers a number of heritage places in the city relating to World War I, including those mentioned above. Note especially the 1913 photograph of soldiers in front of the former GHQ building during the waterfront strikes.

Former US Marines Hall, Titahi Bay

In earlier newsletters we reported on the uncertain future facing this building. The hall, latterly the Titahi Bay Little Theatre, was erected in 1942-43 as a recreation hall for US Marines stationed in the area. It is the only surviving building from the Marines era left in Porirua City. The hall is in a poor state, due to low quality materials when built and inadequate maintenance since then.

Porirua City Council, which owns the building, had decided to demolish it, but this met with community opposition. Historic Places Wellington has made two submissions to the Council opposing demolition, and urging the council to take a fresh look at repairing the hall.

The Council has recently decided to postpone its decision to pursue demolition of the Marines Hall. The Chief Executive has received offers from both Porirua Little Theatre and Titahi Bay Residents Association, for repair and reinstatement of the building. The postponement is to allow Porirua Little Theatre time to further develop a business case for repair and reinstatement of the building using a shared responsibility funding model.

Heritage New Zealand General Policies

Heritage New Zealand is developing a set of polices to guide its future work. These are mandated by the Heritage New Zealand Act. The policies deal with archaeological site management, the NZ Heritage List (formerly the Register), the NZ Landmarks List, heritage advocacy, and management of properties in the care of Heritage New Zealand.
These draft policies were open for submissions. Historic Places Wellington helped our national body Historic Places Aotearoa in preparing a comprehensive submission on the policies. A copy is available on the HPA website: http://historicplacesaotearoa.org.nz/assets/HPA-Submission-to-HNZPT.pdf.

**Continued Closure of Turnbull House**

Turnbull House in Bowen Street, the former home of Alexander Turnbull and subsequently his library, has been closed for over two years awaiting strengthening work. As well as being a significant heritage building, Turnbull House had since the 1970s served as a valued meeting venue as well as providing spaces for a range of cultural and community groups. These groups have been badly disadvantaged by the closure.

The building is managed by the Department of Conservation, and it is understood that strengthening work is still two years away. The committee has written to the Minister of Conservation, Hon Maggie Barry, protesting at the continuing delay and urging that strengthening work on Turnbull House be planned, funded and put into effect. Now that the Wellington City Council’s upgrade of the Cenotaph precinct is complete with significant enhancement of that area, it is surely time for the necessary work on Turnbull House to be started.

**State Houses in Petone**

About 30 members took part in the walk around the Patrick Street area of Petone on a sunny day in March to see the first state houses built in New Zealand. This walk was arranged by the Patrick Street Heritage Group and Petone Historical Society. Before the walk, members met at Alfred Memelink’s gallery on the corner of the Esplanade and Patrick Street for an introduction. Local residents, Sylvia Allan and Tui Lewis led the walk and proved very knowledgeable about the history and design of the houses. Seven different designs were chosen from leading architects, and 33 houses were built in 1906 on the sand hills near Petone Beach. A tribute to their success is that all of these houses except one are still standing and lived in, and indeed are considered greatly desirable dwellings. Members were given a sheet showing where the various designs were located. The photograph shows tour leaders Sylvia Allan (left), a planning consultant, and Tui Lewis, a Hutt City councillor, in front of one of the houses, which is the ‘Spero’ design by architects Penty & Blake who contributed another two designs also. Other architects were Charlesworth, Jack Hoggard, Gray Young and Hurst Seager and Cecil Wood. The Patrick Street Workers' Dwellings Precinct, Petone, is protected as a Heritage Area.

**Registration Proposals**

New Zealand Heritage has recommended that the Executive Wing of Parliament, known as the Beehive, be listed with Category 1 status. The full proposal is a most interesting report, noting its structural uniqueness and outlining the strong views both for and against the building. It also abolishes the popular myth that Sir Basil Spence designed the Beehive on his dinner napkin over a meal with the Prime Minister. Our Committee supports Category 1 heritage status for this building which is one of the most highly recognised throughout New Zealand.

Because there is currently no support organisation for historic places in the Wairarapa, our Society tends to have a “watching brief” by looking at registration proposals for that area. Recently Heritage New Zealand has reviewed all the deficient registrations for the Wairarapa and divided them into two categories – those which will be discontinued (8) and those which are to have “proposal” status (36). Of the latter 9 are in the Masterton local Government area, 7 in Carterton and 20 in South Wairarapa. Proposal status means these will sit in the pipeline waiting until money can be budgeted to research each project in detail.
Members’ Trips and Events

Tour of the Paekakariki area, Sunday 31 May

For our autumn event, we have arranged a tour of the historic features of the southern Kapiti area centred around Paekakariki. We are fortunate in having as our guide Anthony Dreaver, well-known Kapiti historian.

The start time is 1.30 pm, at Paekakariki and should end at approximately 4.30 pm.

You may choose to travel by train, and if coming by car there is plenty of parking near the station. We will send details later if you register for the tour (see below).

Good lunches are available at The Perching Parrot, the Paekakariki Deli or at Finn’s. Finn’s has space for larger groups.

The tour will include Beach Road’s buildings (including St. Peter’s church), the Station precinct, including signal box and museum, Steam Incorporated including the WW2 Marines goods shed, Queen Elizabeth Park, with Marines Memorial, the beach and Whareroa Pa, Whareroa Farm Park (Maori, Mackay’s and Marines interest) and Emerald Glen homestead.

As we need to hire a bus, there will be a charge of $15 per head, payable on the day. Please note that you will need to register for the tour.

Please register by emailing wgtn@historicplacesaotearoa.org.nz, or jr.daniels@clear.net.nz.

Evening classes on heritage and history

Likely to be of special interest to members is the following heritage course -

City Stories: Wellington’s Architectural Heritage: A well-illustrated evening course beginning in June will give an outline of Wellington’s architectural history since 1840 and in particular will look at some of the important buildings that illustrate different periods of its development. It will be taught by Vivienne Morrell who is a former heritage researcher at Heritage New Zealand Central Region, and HPW member. Time: 4 weeks, Thu 5:30 PM – 7:30 PM; beginning 4 June. For more information, or to register, visit the WHS community education centre website: www.cecwellington.ac.nz/courses

We recommend also the following course which will cover some heritage themes –

“A more central position in the colony”: Celebrating 150 years of Wellington as the capital. This five-week course which begins on May 27 explores Maori and Pakeha perspectives of the capital’s social, economic and political history and the context of its move. See the Victoria University Continuing Education website for more information.

Kapiti US Marines Trust Memorial Day

A Service of Commemoration for Memorial Day is being held at the Memorial Site in Queen Elizabeth Park on Monday 25 May at 10am. This one hour service will be followed by a community morning tea. On Sunday 24 May will be two events. In the morning there will be a Walk/Run “In the Footsteps of the Marines” at Whareroa Farm (Camp Mackay) and in the afternoon a Mulled Wine Concert featuring the Rodger Fox Jazz Ensemble. For details on all these events, see www.marinenz.com

Celebrating the Anniversary of Wellington as the Capital City

During the weekend of 25/26 July, the Wellington City Council is planning a series of events celebrating the 150th anniversary of Wellington as the capital city. Although a more central site than Auckland was mooted in the 1850s this controversial proposal was not finally implemented until July 1865. Details of this weekend have yet to be announced so watch the media for events of interest.