There’s a distinctly homely theme to this issue, as well as an ANZAC focus. I recently went on a tour of the unique buildings of Patrick St, Petone, organised by Historic Places Wellington. These attractive homes - still standing strong over 100 years after they were built - are the result of the first New Zealand government building scheme to provide affordable housing for workers. Long may they grace the seaside suburb - and perhaps inspire the powers that be to similar projects!

I also enjoyed a fundraising Devonshire Tea at Golder Cottage. As I sipped my English Breakfast in the tranquil garden, I reflected that the original lady of the house, Jane Golder, would not have had many such moments of relaxation. Widowed and the mother of 12, she cooked on an open fire until the 1920s. One of the committee members showed me a diagram of how the pole supported a pot above the fire. The family would have had very simple meals such as porridge and stews, supplemented with fruit and vegetables from the garden, she explained. The Cottage has had many school children visiting, following the Upper Hutt Primary School anniversary. Funds raised will be going towards general up-keep of the Cottage. The work is never done when you are caring for 100+ year old buildings.

Lastly, Allan Dodson of Pimmerton traces the fascinating history of three houses in Karehana Bay. I hope you enjoy this issue, and you may like to dip into your fellow members’ newsletters from time to time. Your feedback and Calendar dates are always welcome.

Anne Taylor, Editor: editor@wrhpc.org.nz

The Wellington Region Heritage Promotion Council (WRHPC) consists of groups and organisations engaged in promoting our region’s heritage. Visit www.wrhpc.org.nz. WRHPC, 10a/1 Grant Rd, Thorndon, Wellington 6011. Contributions always welcome for Heritage Today.

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Our Taonga: Patrick St

Until last month, my idea of NZ State Houses was the plain yet sturdy 1950s variety. But state housing actually dates back to 1906 in this country, and we are lucky to have many of the 25 original Petone houses still standing just off The Esplanade....

The houses of the ‘Heretaunga Settlement’ were built for workers in response to high rents and growing inner city slums in Wellington. The project was the first in New Zealand under the Seddon Government’s 1905 Workers Dwellings Act, and it was also groundbreaking internationally as the first example of a central government scheme to build affordable housing for its citizens.

A competition was held in 1906 and 34 designs were chosen to be rolled out nationally. Seven designs, all by different local architects, were built in the flagship Petone settlement, their names reflecting optimism and national pride (see Key at right). The homes were attractive and individual, in a conscious effort to avoid the monotonous high density housing already to be seen in early NZ cities. The Stick Style (eg. B) is a distinctive feature in the street. Originating in America, it features timber framing on the outside, often picked out in a contrasting colour. Some of the designs, like ‘York’ (I) look remarkably modern and anticipate the California Bungalow style in NZ, and future state house design.

All the houses had concrete foundations, top quality timber and high construction values. The needs of the families were carefully considered. Most sections are 350 sq.m and the houses have 3-4 bedrooms so boys and girls could have their own space, with one having the luxury of an indoor toilet. Uptake was initially slow due to the houses being literally among the dunes at the far end of town. Rents had to be lowered and public transport improved before tenants started coming forward. They could either lease or lease to buy, and once occupied, they tended to remain in the family for generations. The last was sold onto the open market in 1978.

Sadly, Seddon’s dream of building 5,000 homes nationwide was never realised. By 1910, only 126 had been built, and 657 by 1919. The Depression further impacted on the scheme. However, Patrick St was a radical and progressive plan for its time, on a par with other landmark Liberal reforms. That the overall scheme was not widely rolled out does not diminish the fact that these house improved the lives of many. That they are still standing today is testament to enviable construction and a laudable vision.

Sylvia Allan, along with fellow resident and conservation architect Ian Bowman, has been active in ensuring many of the street’s houses are listed with Historic Places NZ. The facades are protected under the Hutt City District Plan, and there are guidelines for colours and the style of any additions like car ports and garages. Owners needing resource consents have fees waived due to the higher costs of maintaining the heritage homes’ character. Most of the homes retain their original colour scheme. Further reading: Beyond the State - NZ State Houses from Modest to Modern, by Bill McKay & Andrea Stevens, Penguin 2014. Seddon’s State Houses by Barbara Fill is available from Artspace Gallery, 233 The Esplanade.

‘William Mansfield’s one pound note’

Today I found an inscribed Australian £1 note that belonged to William Watts Mansfield [b. Carterton 1889] of Palmerston North in 1915. William was the son of William White and Alice who lived at 14 Hautana Street in Lower Hutt, Wellington. At the time, William was 26 years old and was fighting as part of the Wellington Infantry Battalion who, in August 1915 fought their way up the rugged shores of Gallipoli. This was when William last held his £1 note. Sometime amid all the fighting he thought of home and wrote on it “In case of my death, please send this to my mother as a keepsake”. Below, he signed his name and service number. Soon after William was announced ‘missing during September fighting’. His body, and the £1 note, had not been found.

For months, his parents must have held onto a grain of hope that their son would be found; that he was merely lost or injured in a field hospital somewhere. However, having had no revelations by January 12th in 1916, the Court of Enquiry pronounced Private Mansfield ‘Killed in Action’. Four months later, his father received a letter from the Minister of Defence. The High Commissioner of New Zealand, in London, had heard from the U.S. Ambassador that the Consular Agent in Adrianople had reported that an ‘Ottoman’ was in possession of William’s last note. The Turk said that he had brought the note from the Dardanelles where he had stolen it from the body of a dead soldier. The note had since been sold to a Greek but the United States Ambassador had taken up the task of endeavouring to purchase the note, so that it might be returned to its rightful owner to fulfill William’s last wish. The letter reassures Mr Mansfield that the “Right Honourable Prime Minister has instructed the High Commissioner to spare no efforts to recover the paper money”.

Half way around the world, in the chaos of The Great War, important people took the time to put this personal wrong to right and to help a Kiwi family come to terms with the loss of their son. This very humanity is what William had been fighting for and it must have came as a reassurance to his family, friends and community that his sacrifice had not gone unrecognised, unappreciated or was in vain. By June 1916 Alice Mansfield received a very important parcel. Ten months after the death of William she held the simplest of things, a £1 note, and with it her son’s last thoughts of her. Story by Tessa Smallwood, National Army Museum & submitted by Maureen Leach, Sec., Wairarapa Heritage Assn.

Carterton display remembers local soldiers

The Carterton District Historical Society is mounting a display later this month on the town’s WW1 contribution, local soldiers and other history of the era. Included will be photographs showing the development of the Soldiers Memorial Square in the town centre, & an embroidered blanket that was used in a hospital in England during the war, then returned to New Zealand. This was a fundraising project involving the local community, and it was later kindly donated to the Society. The list of donors will also be on display. T: 06 379 9233. See Calendar. Pg4 for details.

If you have been enjoying Heritage Today, why not pass it on to someone else after reading. You can also make a donation towards its production costs. by going to: http://www.wrhpc.org.nz/donate.htm. We welcome new members and anyone interested in heritage can join WRHPC. For just $30 per year, you will receive Heritage Today bimonthly, details of our meetings and other heritage events, and be able to access an extensive library including newsletters from many local historical societies. Go to: http://www.wrhpc.org.nz/membership_application.htm.

From the archives: Wellington’s first ‘Colonial Museum’

Te Papa’s predecessor, the Colonial Museum, was built in 1865, the same year Wellington became New Zealand’s capital. James Bragg, the prolific photographer of the Wellington region, took this 1880s image of the building as it stood on Museum St. On the street front are the museum’s offices. To the right is the cottage of the Museum Director, Sir James Hector, where he lived with his family until 1882. The museum’s exhibition hall is tucked in between the offices and the cottage.

Te Papa researcher Riah King-Wall relates how the Museum was conceived as a reference resource of NZ’s natural history and geological diversity. His blog entry entitled Stop Thief! details several colourful incidents:

“In 1895 an elderly chap by the name of Charles Robinson was charged with purloining gold and gold-bearing quartz after breaking open a case containing the specimens. He was tracked down by detectives after a few days… still with the quartz and gold held in his coat pockets.”

The Colonial Museum was renamed the Dominion Museum in 1907. Collections had increased significantly in size and variety by the 1930’s, and it had outgrown its initial building, moving to Buckle St in 1936. Resources were still tight, and a gold watch and a glass of rough pearls went missing from a case.

“The prolific thief was found after a night watchman caught him in the midst of another burglary, this time helping himself at a local jewellery store. The ‘perp’ was apprehended on the roof of the shop while trying to hide behind a light. When it became obvious he couldn’t escape, the robber gave himself up and stated “All right. I’m the fellow you’re looking for. I won’t make a fuss.”

Thanks to Riah and Te Papa for permission to reproduce this information from its blog. Read more fascinating insights into our history and the collection: http://blog.tepapa.govt.nz.

A sample of quartz-gold vein.

Photo: Purchased 1955, D.000014, Te Papa.
Above: Nita and Dit Monrad on their wedding day. Centre: Somme House. Right: Lance Corporal Eric Hector Dunstan Craw.

Since being involved in the successful campaign to save his local Plimmerton Railway Station from demolition, Allan Dodson has taken a keen interest in his area’s history, writing regular articles online. He has contributed to the forthcoming ‘Porirua ANZACs’ exhibition at Pataka, researching stories of local men & women who served in the War. Here he traces the WWI connections of Karehana homes....

Plimmerton became a popular seaside resort with the opening of the Wellington – Manawatu rail line, and many holiday homes were built at ‘Plimmerton Extension’ (Karehana Bay) - three of these have interesting names.

Somme House – 1916
At 34 Moana Road was built by Johnsonville builder Archie McMahon. Nita Monrad (nee Craw) was the owner from 1918 and her husband (Dit Monrad) and brother (Hector) who were both were wounded at Gallipoli. 10/2A Private Monrad, Wellington Infantry Regiment, was wounded at Krithia and again at the Somme when he returned to New Zealand and was discharged in 1916. The house was demolished in the late 90’s.

Gallipoli - The Scale of Our War. From 18 Apr
ANZAC Films at Nga Taonga Sound & Vision, $8/$6.

Katherine Mansfield Birthplace, Tinakori Rd. 6.30pm. Tickets $46.

Krithia
At # 65 was built by Henry Butler France and commemorates the 1915 Gallipoli Battle of Krithia in which his son 10/346 Private George Carl France, Wellington Infantry Regiment, was wounded. Following hospital treatment in England Private France returned to to NZ after more active service, in 1919. The house remained in the France family until 1953.

Number 51 is ANZAC Cove -1916, also built by McMahon. The owners were the Lawrence family and it commemorates their son 10/2442 Private Gilbert Alexander Lawrence, Wellington Infantry Regiment. He was wounded during the Battle of Chunak Bair and after treatment in England returned to New Zealand and was discharged in 1916. The house was demolished in the late 90’s.

Nurse Ina Bennett, whose parents were from Plimmerton, was among the first New Zealand nurses who went to WW1. Her brother was serving with the Wellington Infantry on Gallipoli and when she arrived in Malta in June 1915, she heard he was wounded but knew nothing more. A letter by another nurse tells the story of their reunion: 'As soon as I got ashore, an untidy, bedraggled looking man in khaki rushed across the road and greeted me. He turned out to be Dr Simpson [18], a Scotch boy who was at Porirua...He bought over his dilapidated pal, a bundle of cheerful rags, who turned out to be Dr Trotter. They had returned two days ago with a hospital ship of wounded soldiers and how they had to work! They have scarcely any garments but what they stand up in are but perfectly happy. … They are both Captains but wear no badges, and look like two dirty soldiers boys straight from the trenches. We spent a long time hearing of all our friends at the front, and of the nerve and bravery of our dear boys. We stopped every boy we met in Malta with New Zealand on him, as all they are permitted to draw in hospital is 2s per week. One of our nurses heard her brother was wounded before she left New Zealand, and had not been able to hear anything of him since. The first boy I spoke to happened to be named Bennett so I asked him if he had a sister who was a nurse, and he turned out to be the missing brother. You should have seen the meeting...”


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