



HISTORIC PLACES WELLINGTON INC
PO BOX 12426 THORNDON WELLINGTON 6144

NEWSLETTER

A Voice for Heritage

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Editor: Vivienne Morrell

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EVENTS

11 June 2pm: Eating Houses in Wellington in the 1980s – illustrated talk & refreshments (page 5)

Our AGM will be on 27 August at 2pm.

We would welcome more members to join our committee at our AGM in August. Please get in touch if you are interested or would like to know more.

WCC District Plan update – Felicity Wong

HPW is participating in the ongoing hearings by Commissioners of the new district plan. This month is the heritage stream. In 2021, HPW made five nominations for old buildings to be included in the heritage schedule of the District Plan and commissioned expert evidence from Michael Kelly about the heritage value of those buildings. (You can read our [submission here](#).) The Council is now recommending that further research be done and the buildings be “added to the database” for consideration at “a later date”. There are more than 500 buildings on the Council’s nomination database, so HPW is very concerned about the fate of the buildings. With the intensification rules coming into force later this year they will be at real risk of demolition. Two of them are currently protected by the character area provisions of the existing district plan and will otherwise lose that protection later this year: the home of Alfred Kingcombe Newman, Wellington MP for more than 30 years at 15 & 17 Hawkestone St (1879) and Samuel Brown’s house at 22 Hanson St (1880).



In preparing our presentation we also came across the oldest building in Thorndon, 5 Torless Tce (image at left). Brett McKay supplied information showing it was there before 1859.

Two other very old cottages deserve protection: 325 The Terrace (1860) and 41 Normanby St Newtown (c.1870), one of Newtown’s oldest cottages.



Photos: 41 Normanby St and 325 The Terrace

There have been no additions to the district plan heritage schedule for more than a decade. Our previous attempts to have buildings listed (e.g. the Edwardian Terrace commercial/residential buildings in Rugby St next to the Basin Reserve) were met with Council advice that HPW should await the opportunity of the district plan revision for extending listing protection. We waited and the buildings were hastily demolished leaving a vacant lot for the new Chinese Embassy. It's entirely predictable the same will happen without faster positive action.



Council efforts to pursue the listing of several modernist buildings in the present process is however welcome¹.

Professional heritage evaluations were completed for a selection of buildings which are proposed for listing (e.g. Wharenui and Olympus Apartment buildings on Oriental Parade). Some were first mooted for protection in the late 1990s. In 2001 for example, WCC commissioned the Non-Residential Inventory Review and consultants identified additional places that resulted in Plan Change 58 (2008). One of those buildings was an Edmund Anscombe designed commercial building at 233 Willis St. After Commissioners recommended it be listed in 2008 there followed litigation and it is only now being considered again for inclusion in the heritage schedule. But time has elapsed and it's not only on TradeMe for sale, but a demolition consent has been issued by

the Council. Photo: 233 Willis St, 1960s, WCC council staff photographer (WCC Archives²)

HPW is opposing Te Herenga Waka's (Victoria University) proposals to de-list the Gordon Wilson Flats and the Robert Stout building. We have arranged for evidence to be given to the Commissioners by respected architect, author and lecturer, Bill McKay - very much appreciated, thank you.

¹ Toomath House (1964); Sutch House (1953-56); Khan House (1941); Firth House (1941); Dobson House (1959)

² Reference: <https://archivesonline.wcc.govt.nz/nodes/view/685042>

In addition, HPW has brought to the attention of Commissioners important old areas of the inner suburbs which are at risk of having their existing demolition controls lifted when the character areas are replaced with smaller “character precincts”:

- Portland Cres / Hawkestone St, Thorndon
- The Terrace / Percival St
- Lipman / Levy Sts, Mt Victoria
- Upper Rolleston / Hargreaves Sts, Mt Cook
- Emmett / Green Sts, Newtown
- East end Normanby / Donald McLean Sts, Newtown

These are some very old areas of concentrated character and heritage which deserve to be listed for their own considerable heritage values or at least be included in character precincts.

Recent commentary on housing and ‘character’ and ‘upzoning’ in Wellington - Vivienne Morrell

At the end of April, political economics commentator Bernard Hickey interviewed WCC councillor Rebecca Matthews about housing and plan changes in Wellington.³ Part of the discussion related to the ‘character’ housing areas and at about 8 minutes in, Bernard expresses the rhetorical question ‘do these people have no shame’ – he is talking about groups like ours who argued for retention of the current character areas. I became aware of this interview because of criticism of it by Stephen Minto⁴ Among other points he says:

“But without evidence Mr Hickey and Ms Matthews criticise people using democratic processes to protect themselves from very real impacts like loss of character, heritage, sunlight, privacy, and green spaces. ... Without a strong focus on heritage/character in our cities there will be a loss of a sense of place, of what is different about this place (e.g. Wellington and New Zealand) and the stories of the lives of past residents – that connect to this or that building or place. And without that sense of something that looks different and reflects our past we won’t have a sense of where we came from, of what makes us different and therefore what makes us special.”

In mid-April, Bernard Hickey had also commented on housing ‘upzoning’ in Wellington.⁵ In response, our chair Felicity Wong wrote to him in her personal capacity (he hasn’t replied): “I’m keen to draw your attention to inaccuracies in [that] report. You mention villa controls in Wellington suburbs “Kelburn, Brooklyn, and Miramar”. There’s no protection of villas in those suburbs at all and none is proposed. You were right to mention Mt Victoria and Mt Cook, however.

Secondly, you frequently mention “medium density” as being the subject of conflicting views at council and in the community. In fact, in Wellington, there is no disagreement by any Councillors about MDRS for all Wellington suburbs and never has been. There continues to be consensus (including by Council staff) that MDRS is appropriate for all suburbs, including the inner (old) suburbs of Mt Victoria and Mt Cook. MDRS and “medium density” will be applied throughout Wellington, entirely without conflict (unlike in Auckland and Christchurch).

The difference of opinion in Wellington is about high density. It’s misleading for you not to accurately reflect that. At present, Kainga Ora is proposing high density zoning (36-43m) for Kelburn, Brooklyn, Newtown, Tawa and Miramar. Also, there is no lack of such high-density zoned land in Wellington, though there is considerable land banking.

Your latest podcast with Councillor Matthews is similarly misleading in suggesting Council staff are in cahoots with ‘leafy suburb types’. In your characterisation of the “democratic deficit” you undermine the very democratic institutions with inaccurate information.

There is a legitimate conversation about the extent of high density in Wellington and both you and Councillor Matthews shy from discussing that.”

³ You can listen here: <https://thekaka.substack.com/p/interview-inside-wellingtons-local#details>

⁴ You can read it here: <https://thedailyblog.co.nz/2023/05/08/bernard-hickey-not-on-his-game/>

⁵ You can listen to that here: <https://thekaka.substack.com/p/councils-staff-go-rogue-on-densification#details>

New Zealand's Own Museum of Buildings – Nigel Isaacs

The Woolshed Cafe (2879 State Highway 1, Sanson), located about 1 km south of Sanson, has relocated a selection of seven New Zealand houses into a heritage walk - a 'walk through time.'

Each house (1860, 1880, 1900, 1920, 1930, 1940 and 1960) is displayed externally and internally to give a feeling of what it was like when it was new. As you walk through the site, the bungalow becomes an Art Deco villa to a statehouse, the kitchen stove becomes an electric oven, windows change from double-hung sash to casement. Depending on your childhood, walking through the houses could make you understand how things have changed or give you a shiver of memories.

The museum has been designed with great care, and each house presented in a well-maintained condition, sitting on a carefully laid out site with paths and garden. Depending on your interest, it takes at least 1½ hours to wander through all the houses, guided by an excellent audio commentary. There are plans for adding more houses.

The very reasonable entrance fee includes the audio guide and provides some funds to help maintain the museum. The path is open to the elements. The visit is about 500 metres of walking and some steps – ensure you have clothing appropriate for the day. The 'Heritage Walk' is open 9 am till 3 pm, Wednesday to Sunday. For more information the phone number is 06-329 3295 and website: <https://www.woolshedcafe.co.nz/>



Past Events

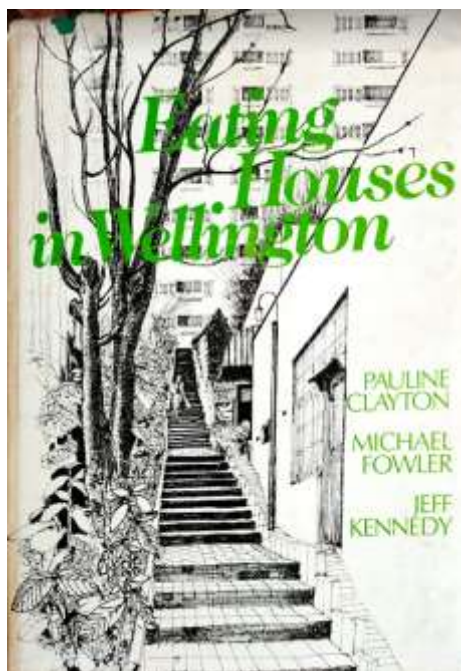


Sunday 23 April at 2pm: Murder and Mayhem in Mt Victoria walk. Alan Olliver of the Mt. Victoria Historical Society led 14 of us on a fascinating walk around part of Mt Victoria to hear the stories and see the sites of vicious murders, raging fires, a tram tragedy, and much more.

Beginning near St Gerard's Church and ending in Pirie Street at the house where a 'justifiable homicide' took place (that is, murder in self-defence) Alan also handed around helpful images with old photos and news items to provide more context.

Photo: The walking group in Hawker Street

Upcoming Events



Sunday 11 June 2pm – *Eating Houses of Wellington in the early 1980s* – an illustrated talk by Vivienne Morrell (with Lois Daish)

At St Peter's Church Garden Room (located behind St Peter's Church, 211 Willis St, access from Ghuznee St)

The idea for this talk came from the book *Eating Houses in Wellington*, published in 1980. The text was by Pauline Clayton, Jeff Kennedy had the restaurant connections, and illustrations were by then Wellington mayor (and architect) Michael Fowler.

Michael Fowler says of his involvement: "So this girl walks into my office and says, 'Will the Wellington City Council underwrite the cost of a book which will promote tourism because it is going to be about Wellington eating houses?' 'No', says I. 'But I will do the drawings.'"

The book includes 30 places – I have limited my selection to talk about and will focus on about 10, looking at what the book said, the illustrations, some history about the building and historic images where I could find them, and what's there today. Perhaps surprisingly, most of the buildings are still there.

Former restaurant owner and food writer Lois Daish is one of the restaurant owners in the book, and she will speak about hers and connections with others near the end of the talk.

The presentation will be followed by refreshments. Feel free to wear some 80s fashion to the event, if you want!

Vivienne is a committee member of HPW and formerly worked at Historic Places Trust (now Heritage NZ) and used to teach an evening class on Wellington's heritage buildings.

Please RSVP to our email address: wqtn@historicplacesaotearoa.org.nz

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We are currently trying to organise future speaker events. We will email members with details when confirmed, but you can also check our website's upcoming events page:

<https://historicplaceswellington.org/upcoming-events/>

*

Our AGM this year will be on **Sunday 27 August at 2pm**. Our speaker will be PhD candidate Eva Forster-Garbutt who is researching historic domestic interiors. Further details will be given in our August newsletter.

We would welcome more members to join our committee at the AGM or earlier. Please get in touch if you are interested or would like to know more.

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Other organisations events: Next Monday (15 May) at City Gallery Wellington, 6pm, '*Athfield's Crafty Architecture: Falling petals and lost opportunities*'. Architectural scholar Dr Kate Linzey will discuss the creation and loss of Ian Athfield's now-demolished First Church of Christ Scientist in Willis St, and make some suggestions about its ongoing legacy in our post-carbon future. See [this Facebook page](#) for more details. Also livestream: <https://bit.ly/411oagc>

If you like music in historic venues, currently there are concerts being held at [St Andrews on the Terrace](#), Wednesday lunchtimes (most of the year); at [Futuna Chapel](#) in Karori on Sunday

afternoons to 28 May; at [Old St Paul's](#), Mulgrave St on Thursday lunchtimes until 27 July; and St Paul's Cathedral, Molesworth St on Fridays at 12:45. Click the links for more details.

Wellington prison gardens – Vivienne Morrell

If after reading this, anyone is keen to visit the Miramar community garden, please email me with expressions of interest. We could visit on a weekday (perhaps a Thursday) using the scenic route number 24 bus: wgtn@historicplacesaotearoa.org.nz

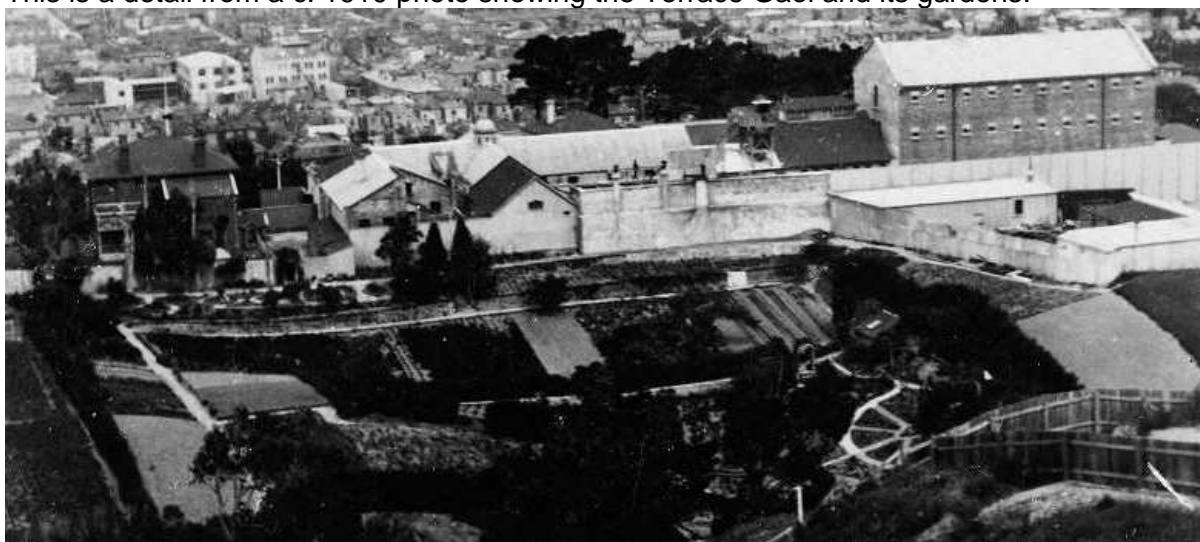


Recently a keen and knowledgeable volunteer gave a few of us a tour around the Mt Crawford prison community garden. It has a hilltop location on Miramar Peninsula near the former Mt Crawford Prison. (They are on Facebook as the [Miramar Prison Garden](#).)

The current garden is located a little below Mt Crawford prison, which opened in 1927 and [closed](#) in 2012. I decided to do a bit of research on prison

gardens in Wellington.

This is a detail from a c. 1910 photo showing the Terrace Gaol and its gardens.⁶



The Terrace Gaol was eventually supplanted by Mt Crawford Prison when it opened in 1927 and now Te Aro school (360 The Terrace) partially occupies the former Terrace Gaol site.

But before Mt Crawford Prison there was already a prison on Miramar Peninsula: Point Halswell Prison – located on the northern end of Miramar Peninsula, further down the hill from the current Mt Crawford buildings, but not quite on the point where Massey Memorial now is. This prison dates from 1888, when it was decided to use prison labour to assist with the construction of coastal

⁶ Source: Terrace Gaol and gardens, Wellington. Fry, Pat. Ref: 1/2-058369-F. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand. [/records/22570645](#)

defences, and the camp used by the workers was declared a prison in March 1888.⁷ And P S Garvey was gazetted the gaoler.⁸ Prisoners at Point Halswell also assisted with the construction of the military roads and continued to do intermittent work on the defences and at the prison farm until 1919.

The pines which cover much of the northern and western slopes of the Miramar Peninsula were first planted in 1907. Convict labour was used to plant trees around Point Halswell in 1913, and by April 1915, 140,000 trees had been planted with plans for 90,000 more that year.⁹

In 1919, the Point Halswell buildings were converted to a women's prison. There was local opposition to this location – but in dismissing these objections, it was noted there was already a couple of acres of vegetable gardens and a large area of dairying.¹⁰ However, when the prison was almost ready in 1920, the Minister for Justice told a reporter that it was only temporary and the Government “had definitely decided not to place a permanent prison on Point Halswell. He recognised that the peninsula was one of the scenic features of Wellington and that in years to come it would be required by the city for residential or other purposes”.¹¹

It was only a few years later that Mt Crawford was chosen as the new permanent Wellington prison site! In 1923, Seatoun ratepayers were reported as particularly indignant at the location.¹² The prison opened in early 1927. Eighteen months later it was reported there were flower beds and lawns inside the prison complex.¹³

In 1936, the Wellington Beautifying Society wanted to plant many trees around Wellington and got the cooperation of the prison to grow seedlings. In 1936 the Controller-General of Prisons sought from the Public Works Department: “...the sum of £11 to enable the glass house at Wellington Prison to be extended so that seedlings etc. may be reared in connection with the Harbour Front Beautification Scheme. We have undertaken to do a considerable amount of planting on the Peninsula.”¹⁴

Thousands of tree seedlings continued to be grown in subsequent years. In 1938 it was said that the Beautifying Society provided the materials “including those for glasshouses and frames, etc” while the prisoners provided the labour.¹⁵

However, by 1944, the Beautifying Society reported that the glasshouse was seriously dilapidated and it would require a considerable amount to ‘renovate it’.¹⁶ By 1946 it was said the glasshouse was beyond repair and would be demolished and a new and larger one had been designed by a returned soldier in hospital.¹⁷

Unfortunately, I couldn't find any proof that the glasshouse was rebuilt, but I assume it was in about 1947 and this photo, taken in January 1950, shows a portion of the recently built glasshouse, which is still there.¹⁸

⁷ New Zealand Herald, 7 March 1888, p. 5. See also the Archaeological Assessment done for WCC and LINZ: Motukairangi Miramar Peninsula, Subsurface Archaeological Services [Andy Dodd], 2020. [Accessed here](#).

⁸ New Zealand Times, 31 March 1888, p. 2

⁹ Archaeological Assessment – see footnote 7 for the full details.

¹⁰ Evening Post, 17 September 1919, p. 8

¹¹ Dominion, 14 February 1920, p. 6

¹² NZ Times, 29 September 1923, p.5

¹³ Dominion, 25 June 1928, p.6

¹⁴ Archives NZ file: Code no. [R20125787](#); Record No. 25/508, Box 632, part 2

¹⁵ Evening Post, 7 April 1938, p. 10

¹⁶ Evening Post, 15 November 1944, p.6

¹⁷ Bay of Plenty Times, 24 December 1946, p. 2

¹⁸ Photo credits: 1. Mount Crawford Prison, Miramar Peninsula, Wellington. Evening post newspaper. Ref: 114/104/06/31-F. Alexander Turnbull Library. [/records/22308858](#) 2. Mount Crawford Prison vegetable gardens, Miramar Peninsula, Wellington. Evening post newspaper. Ref: 114/105/02-G. Alexander Turnbull Library. [/records/22738307](#)



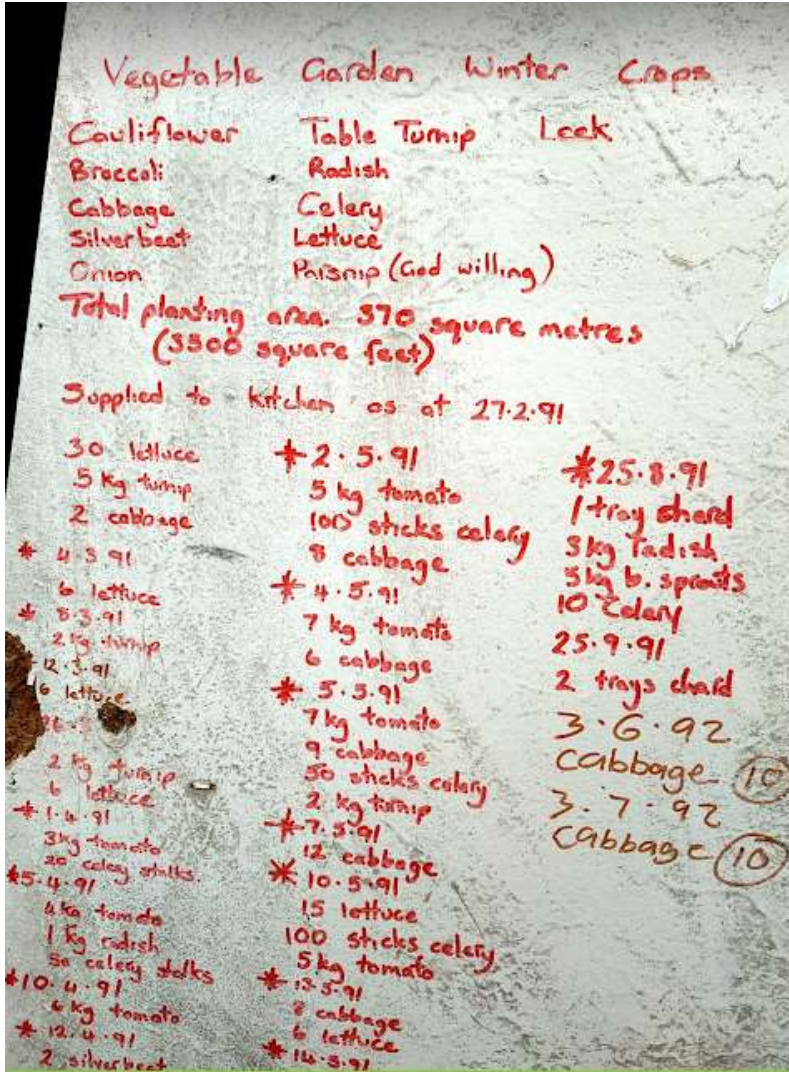
This photo taken at the same time (Jan 1950) shows the extensive vegetable gardens:



To complete the story of Point Halswell prison, the buildings were converted to a prison training centre in 1958. The buildings were removed in about 1980 - the location has been used as a film set on numerous occasions since then.¹⁹

¹⁹ Archaeological Assessment (see footnote 7). The site of the Women's Prison is recorded as archaeology site R27/383.

This sign (recently discovered in the greenhouse) shows some of the produce the gardens produced for the Mt Crawford prison kitchens in 1991 –



The Miramar garden today:

It was established as a community garden in 2012 by John Overton when the prison closed. It is a mixture of private plots and communal spaces and there are now over 130 members.

Earlier this year, [plans were announced](#) for several hundred new houses on the prison site and surrounds.

The proposal is to build up to 700 homes on top of Mt. Crawford, in addition to the 300 homes planned for Shelly Bay making a total of 1000 new homes.

A cable car is planned from the top (probably from near the greenhouse) down to Shelly Bay.

However, the Minister for the Environment recently [declined to refer the proposal to the fast-tracking](#) approval procedure, so it will have to go through the usual consent processes.

Here are two more views of the greenhouse taken on the recent visit:

