

HERITAGE

HE REO MO NGĀ TAONGA TUKU IHO

VOICES

2026 AUTUMN
NEWSLETTER

HISTORIC
PLACES
AOTEAROA

A HISTORY OF EARLY STATE HOUSE “WORKERS’ DWELLINGS”

Begins on Page 4...



An early ‘Workers’ Dwelling’ in Hastings. *Photo / Harcourts*



Elizabeth Pishief
HPA Chair

Hello everyone. Welcome to our Autumn edition of Heritage Voices/He Reo Mo Ngā Taonga Tuku Iho.

Key things to note:

- [Submissions](#)
- [Blue Plaques](#)
- [Association for Critical Heritage Studies \(ACHS\) Conference – 2026 – Tūhono](#)

[Submissions](#)

We have had a busy start to the year with the preparation of two submissions. The first was on the two Bills that are to reform the Resource Management Act: The Planning Bill and the Natural Environment Bill. The second submission was on the Building (Earthquake-prone Building) Amendment Bill. Our submissions are on our website for those people who would like to read them.

We asked to speak to our submission on the

Resource Management reform and were fortunate to be given an opportunity to speak to the Select committee about our submission. None of the other independent heritage organisations who put in submissions were invited to speak. It was disappointing that everyone could not speak.

We said in our submission that we support the reform of the Resource Management Act but oppose the Bills in their present form. Significant changes are needed to make them acceptable and workable because of the disregard for the importance of historic heritage in the Planning Bill and the total absence of historic heritage in the Natural Environment Bill.

The separation of the 'land' from the 'environment' by dividing the Planning Bill from the Natural Environment Bill is illogical and the rationale is difficult to understand. The purpose of the Planning Bill is to establish a framework for planning and regulating the use, development, and enjoyment of land. The purpose of the Natural Environment Bill is to establish a framework for the use, protection and enhancement of the natural environment. These two purposes are incompatible and will result in further degradation of the environment across the country.

We consider the separation of the Natural Environment from the Planning Bill to be a short-sighted division in the face of climate change and current environmental reality. The Bills need to be reframed to elevate the environment, which includes historic heritage, over the economy. A healthy environment creates healthy people who are able to build a strong and vibrant economy. Our overriding concern is that the Bills ensure good outcomes for both historic heritage and the natural environment in a world with a changing climate. The idea of landscape is a unifying concept, and we asked for 'landscape' to be added to the definition of historic heritage.

Also, we questioned the reason for separating the Natural Environment Bill from the Planning Bill since work is underway to disestablish the Ministry for the Environment and transfer its functions to a new entity (a Ministry of Cities, Environment, Regions and Transport).

Historic heritage is a significant element in the construction of our national identity and important for the wellbeing of communities. It makes a vital contribution to our tourism sector and earns New Zealand many millions of dollars every year.

Denigrating and ignoring historic heritage, the landscapes surrounding these heritage areas, places and sites, and the many communities who support the retention and enhancement of our valued places, is not a function of good government and certainly does not support the economy.

We will have an opportunity to speak to our submission on the Building (Earthquake-prone Building) Amendment Bill.

The intention of this Bill is to establish a more proportionate and risk-based regulatory system for managing earthquake-prone buildings. The legislation applies equally to an officially listed heritage building as any other non-listed old building and a more modern building. Heritage buildings are often more affected by seismic legislation and any increase in Building Code requirements, simply because of their age. Our cities and regional towns have many character heritage buildings and hence our intense interest in the ramifications of the legislation.

The costs associated with upgrading any heritage building to comply with either seismic, fire, accessibility or other requirement of the Building Act is huge and often unaffordable, especially in regional New Zealand where economic returns on rents etc., are much lower, yet building costs are not reduced. Encouragement and support to upgrade buildings is as important as the stick of legislative requirements. HPA would welcome the Government's ongoing efforts to encourage even faster upgrading of heritage buildings especially via tax relief/incentives and grants if possible. The return on 'investment' via GST and higher tax income to the government from fully functioning buildings will quickly repay itself. Saving New Zealand's heritage is the added benefit, as well as reduced demolition to landfill. It is a much more sustainable option for our environment.

In this submission we discussed liability, the need for clarity on what the definition of a 3-storeyed building is, change of use, the strengthening of buildings in small regional centres, multi-owner buildings, priority thoroughfares, changes to the Building Consent process for earthquake-prone buildings and the importance of Incentives. For the details of our submission please go to our submission on the website.

[Blue Plaques](#)

We have had our first group of applications for funding for blue plaques which we are able to offer



because of the generosity of Awheronui Charitable Trust. We are processing them now and will have the results back to the applicants by the end of March. We are very pleased with the response, which was initially slow but happily sped up at the end of the application period. If Member Organisations are contemplating applying for funding assistance the next round will be closing on 30 June 2026.

The policy outlines the funding framework for HPA Member Organisations who are seeking financial support to install Blue Plaques on buildings of historic significance in their areas.

- The applicant must be an HPA Member Organisation.
- Applications must be for the installation of Blue Plaques on buildings located in New Zealand.
- Each Member Organisation may submit applications up to three times per year, for one, or more plaques.
- The dates to remember are:

Round	Closing Date	Applicants notified
1	28 Feb	31 March
2	30 June	31 July
3	31 Oct	30 Nov

The policy aims to encourage the commemoration of heritage places and to foster collaboration between building owners and HPA Member Organisations.

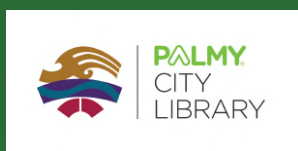
For further information and an application form please go to the Blue Plaque website <https://www.blueplaques.nz/> or contact HPA on info@historicplacesaotearoa.co.nz

Association for Critical Heritage Studies (ACHS) Conference – 2026 – Tūhono

The Association of Critical Heritage Studies will be holding its biennial international conference in Wellington between the 29 November and 2 December 2026. TŪHONO means to connect. At ACHS 2026, guided by our theme of RELATIONALITY, we will explore how heritage connects us with each other, with the past and with the land. Historic Places Aotearoa is one of the sponsors of the conference.

I encourage you to look at the website and if you are interested join the mailing list and consider attending all or some of the events.

<https://www.achs2026.nz/>



Heritage Festival

Five weeks of events bringing our heritage to life



8 March - 12 April 2026

Deepen your understanding of people and place

A HISTORY OF EARLY STATE HOUSE “WORKERS’ DWELLINGS”



CHANCELLOR STREET SETTLEMENT, CHRISTCHURCH.



Dorothy Pilkington
HP Hawkes Bay

For our Historic Places Hawke’s Bay’s “Lunchtime Lectures” series last year, I offered to talk about Hastings’ first state houses built in Akina Street late in 1937.

As an introduction to the talk, I planned to refer very briefly to the first government housing scheme of the early 1900s, that resulted in the construction of a group of “workers’ dwellings” in Petone’s Patrick Street. To my surprise, when I did further reading about this Liberal Party initiative, there were far more houses built under that scheme than I had realised, and they were located not only in the four main centres - they were built in urban and rural locations all over the country-ranging from Tolaga Bay to Invercargill.

In Hawke’s Bay there were two groups in Hastings, and one in Napier

A 1920 report in the Appendices to the Journals of the House of Representatives (AJHR) contains a list of all houses built since the passing of the Workers’ Dwellings Act in 1905 - giving the total as 815. Not a lot, compared with the 1930s Labour Government’s State Housing scheme, with over 9,000 houses built by 1940. But that does need to be considered in light of the fact that at the beginning of the 20th century the population of New Zealand was only around 880,000.

Image in the 1914 annual report on Workers’ Dwelling in the Appendices to the Journals of the House of Representatives *H-11b*

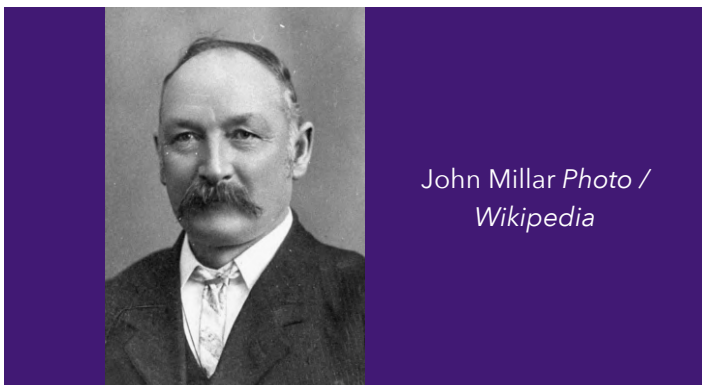
In Britain, concern about the standard of worker housing had, from the mid 19th century led to initiatives by charitable societies, philanthropic factory owners providing for their staff, and local councils, but the passing of New Zealand’s Workers’ Dwellings Act was groundbreaking - it was the first time the state had taken responsibility for provision of worker housing.

Centre stage in developing the scheme was Premier, Richard Seddon, and a number of the subdivisions have a “Seddon Street” or “Seddon Terrace.” At Otahuhu the block of land the government bought for the scheme was called the Eccleston Settlement, and in Dunedin the land was called the Windle Settlement -Eccleston and Windle are both part of the borough of St Helen’s in Lancashire where Richard Seddon was born.

Seddon’s enthusiasm for the scheme was in part fired by genuine desire to improve the living conditions of the less well off in society, but he also saw it as a strategic move. By assisting with living costs of working-class families union demands for wage increases might be dampened down.

However, although Seddon’s role was important, the first houses were still not completed when he died on 10 June 1906. The real driver of the scheme thereafter was John Millar, who was appointed as Minister of Labour in Joseph Ward’s

cabinet in August 1906, and held the portfolio until 1912. Millar had been a member of the Seamen's Union since 1882, went on to become Union secretary, then initiated a federation of a number of unions, known as the Maritime Council. He helped establish the Tailoresses Union, the first women's union in New Zealand in 1890, and in that year also organised the country's first nationwide labour dispute, when the Maritime Council declared a strike in sympathy for Australian maritime unionists. As a Christian socialist Millar firmly believed in "equal opportunities for all, equal laws for all and work for all who wanted it, but none should eat who did not work except for the aged, the sick and the children."



John Millar Photo /
Wikipedia

An Advisory Committee and Chief Advisory Officer were appointed to oversee the operation of the scheme. James Mackay, Chief Inspector of Factories in the Labour Department was the first Advisory Officer, but he died in mid 1907, and John Lomas was appointed to take over both these positions. Lomas, originally a coalminer, had become a leader in the Miners' Union, and was elected treasurer when the Maritime Council was formed. As a declared supporter of the emerging Liberal Party, in 1891 he was employed as a clerk in the Labour Department, and in 1893 became inspector of factories in Westland/Canterbury, later being transferred to Dunedin.

Millar also appointed an architect to oversee the housing programme. Initially, Seddon's government had asked local architects to submit suitable plans for the workers' houses. The brief was to design a house "with five rooms and a bathroom and all modern conveniences" to cost no more than £350 if built in wood and £450 if in brick. Some 150 designs were received with a number of architects submitting multiple designs. Prizes were awarded for the best designs in both South and North Islands – £100 for first, £50, second and £25 third. The first houses in Auckland's Lawry Settlement (Ellerslie) and Eccleston Settlement (Otahuhu), Heretaunga

Settlement (Petone) in Wellington, Camelot Settlement (Sydenham) in Christchurch, and Windle Settlement (Belleknowes) in Dunedin were built to a selection of these designs. The prizewinning "Comfort" design submitted by Samuel Hurst Seagar and Cecil Wood was built in Hagley Park for display in the International Exhibition in November 1906 and then moved to Longfellow Street in the Camelot Settlement.



Workers dwelling built for the New Zealand International Exhibition in Christchurch. Dickie, John, 1869-1942: Collection of postcards, prints and negatives. Ref: 1/2-034689-G. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand. /records/22343959



Christchurch City Council Libraries: File
Reference CCL-KPCD06-0049

A newspaper report in October 1906 listing the houses then available for occupation in the Lawry and Eccleston Settlements, details the architects: Edward Mahoney and Son (design used for two houses), James Slator (three), Ashley Hunter (two) Gerald E Jones (three) J M Walker (three) Everard H Biss (four) Alex Wiseman (three).



A design submitted by Everard Biss for a workers' dwelling. Photo / AWMM Tamaki Paenga Hira

In March 1907, Woburn Temple, an English architect who had recently arrived in Auckland, was appointed as Architect to the Department of Labour, and assigned his first task of preparing plans for a block of houses to be built in Coromandel Street, in Newtown, Wellington, and adding more houses at Camelot in Sydenham. Temple prepared a number of standardized designs that were used thereafter, but applicants for the houses could still request small adaptations to suit their family's needs.

By June 1907 71 homes had been built: 20 at the two locations in Auckland, 25 at Petone, 12 in Christchurch, and 14 in Dunedin. In Sydenham demand far outstripped supply, the Auckland sites also proved popular, but the Windle Settlement in Dunedin, and Petone's Heretaunga did not have many applicants. Windle was criticised as being exposed to prevailing winds, with poor access, and too far from the city centre where many of the target tenants worked. At Petone, the main gripe was that it was a 20-minute walk to the railway station, which

was the main means of transport into Wellington where most potential tenants worked.

The houses were for lease but there was always an option to "rent to buy". Rental for the first houses built ranged from 9 shillings and 5 pence to 10 shillings and 6 pence per week depending on location, size of the house, and the materials used in construction. From 1907, when Temple experimented by having two houses built with solid (9 inch) concrete external walls and foundations, a number of houses were built this way, although this seems to have been limited to South Island locations.



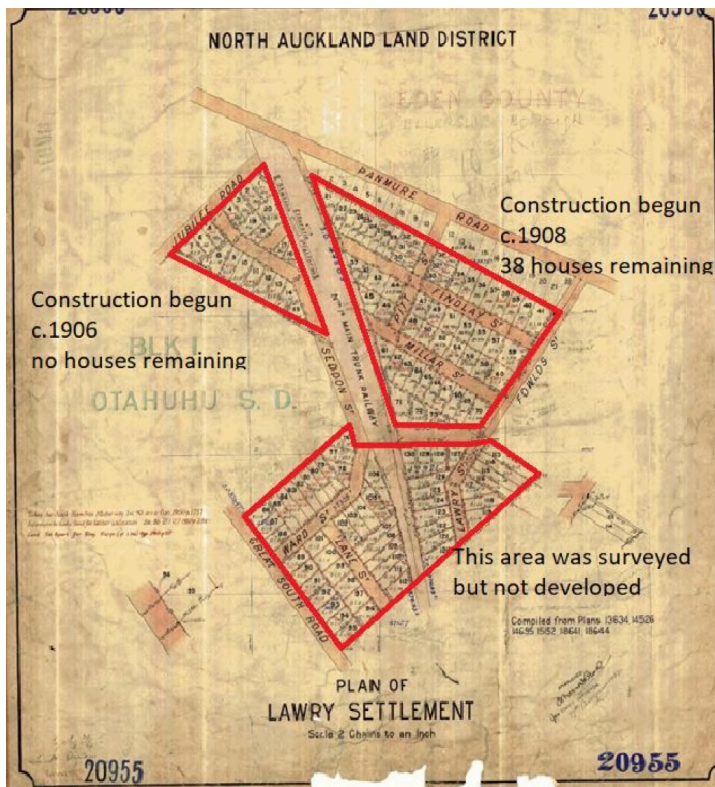
Front elevation of Woburn Temple's house design No 7. Photo / HNZPT

The income limit for applicants when the scheme was launched was £200 per year. Another requirement was that the applicant did not own any land. Priority for tenancy was given to "men with families, and widows and widowers with families."

From the beginning there was criticism that the scheme did not cater for the "workers" it was intended for. However, from the lists of tenants published in AJHR, it seems that most were, indeed, workers, and many were manual workers.

At Ellerslie in 1907, for example, the houses were occupied by a grocer, carpenter, warehouseman, signalman, agent, dressmaker, commercial traveller, clerk, gardener, compositor, paper-ruler, railway employee, wife of a carpenter, painter, clerk

of works, widow, grocer's assistant, mechanic, carpenter, metalworker, musician, schoolteacher, train examiner, Deputy Registrar of births etc., and French polisher.



Plan for Ellerslie's Lawry Settlement – as with many of the blocks purchased, only part of the land was used for workers' dwellings built under the scheme. *Photo / Auckland Council SO20955 (undated, approved 1920)*

Although historians have largely, focused on the part played by the Liberal Government when writing about this scheme, and it is generally accepted that World War I brought about its decline and eventual demise, in fact, the figures show it was not until the Act was revised in 1910, that the scheme was extended beyond the four main centres. By then only 127 houses had been built.

Over the next two years, progress in getting projects underway in other towns was slow. In July 1912, when Joseph Ward's Liberals were defeated in a no confidence vote and Massey's Reform Government took power, the total number of workers dwellings that had been built since 1905 numbered just 185. It was between that time and the replacement of the Workers' Dwellings Act by the Housing Act in 1919, that the Reform Government authorised the building of over 600 dwellings for workers in locations scattered all over the North and South Islands. And as testimony to the quality of these first state homes for workers, a significant number of them are still there, well-loved and cared for over a century later.

WORKERS' DWELLING LOCATIONS

City/Town	No. built	Location details
Auckland	132	Lawry Settlement, Ellerslie , named for MP for Parnell, Frank Lawry Millar, Findlay, Pitt, Fowlds, Seddon Streets (now Ramsgate, Findlay, Hewson, and Cawley.) <i>Eccleston no 2 Settlement, Otahuhu</i> Seddon Terrace
Wellington	238	Heretaunga Settlement, Petone Patrick Street Petone = Wilford Settlement, named for Sir Thomas Mason Wilford, Liberal MP for Hutt for 27 years from 1902. William Street, Bracken Street Island Bay, Derwent Street = (first Wellington group built under the 1910 amended Act, completed 1912) Newtown, Coromandel Street, Seddon Terrace. Taitville (Aro Valley/Highbury), Norway, Thule, Irvine, Entrance Streets
Christchurch	72	Camelot Settlement, Sydenham Longfellow, Tennyson, Millar, Seddon Streets Walker Settlement, Addington, named for William Campbell Walker Legislative Councillor, Governor Canterbury College, owned the land and gave it for workers' homes. Mandeville Street - 6 concrete houses, one existing wooden house renovated and added to, plus 10 more in 1912. Chancellor Street Settlement

City/Town	No. built	Location details
Dunedin	31	Windle Settlement, Bellenowes, Rosebery Street, Newport Street
Hamilton	9	Laurenson Settlement (Frankton Junction) Forest Lake Road
Paeroa	1	
Ngaruawahia	6	Ellery Street Settlement
Tauranga	6	Fraser Street Settlement
Te Puke	7	No 2 Road
Te Awamutu	6	(land bought from Mr A S Wallace). Puniu Road
Tolaga Bay	8	Uawa Settlement (Block 10 = five acres) Described as being near the hotel (12 Cook Street), and "on the beachfront".
Gisborne	14	Te Hapara Settlement (part of Block 9, Te Hapara, 6.5 acres) Birrell, Haldane, Redmond, Scott, Andrew Streets
Napier	7	Te Awa Avenue, Awatoto
Hastings	14	Lomas Settlement: Clive, Lucknow, Cawnpore Streets, changed in 1916 after Battle of Jutland to Jellicoe, Beatty, Hood Streets Mahora Settlement: Evenden Road, Pakowhai Road
Patea	10	Council sold reserve land (Blocks 32 and 38)
Hawera	9	High Street
Manaia	2	
New Plymouth	7	Paynter's Avenue, built by March 1918.
Waitara	1	
Whanganui	19	Ballance Settlement (Gonville): Konini Street Willis Settlement (Whanganui East): Young Street
Marton	5	
Palmerston North	17	Loughnan Settlement (named for owner of land who sold it to Govt): Millar Street
Masterton	32	Kuripuni Settlement: Tararua Street, Solway Settlement (rural, five acre blocks): Ngaumutawa Road
Carterton	5	Park Road Settlement: Park Road (3 urban houses, 2 rural)
Picton	6	Built same time as Blenheim houses - tender called November 1914.
Blenheim	5	Rural at Grovetown, just outside Blenheim. Rowley Crescent named for Fortescue William Thomas Rowley, Secretary for Labour, and Superintendent of the Workers' Dwellings scheme, who took over when John Lomas retired December 1913.
Nelson	18	Winearls Settlement (name of owner of land. MP Harry Atmore's mother Ellen was a member of the Winearls family, the land was sited opposite Trafalgar Park). Elliott Street and Trafalgar Street.

City/Town	No. built	Location details
Westport	12	Leaver Settlement (Section 7, Block III, 2 acres 3 roods, Orowaiti beach)
Greymouth	14	Cobden Settlement: Ward Street, Sturge Street
Ashburton	6	Allenton
Temuka	9	Buxton Settlement: (Thomas Buxton, MP for Geraldine and later Temuka) Seddon Street
Timaru	19	Craigie Settlement (James Craigie Liberal MP for Timaru, 1908-1922, also Mayor of Timaru): Melton Street
Fairlie	7	Rural
Willowbridge	13	First rural settlement under Reform Govt, January 1914. 5 acre blocks in a settlement near Waimate originally part of Waimate Estate owned by Studholmes
Waimate	6	Gorge Road Settlement (Built on the former showgrounds): Massey Street
Oamaru	9	George Street Settlement: North Road
Invercargill	19	Seaward Bush Settlement: Elles Road, McQuarrie Street

"Baroque"



Photo / Milanoguida, Linvisible

Baroque architecture, emerging in late 16th-century Italy, is a highly ornate, theatrical style designed to evoke emotion, awe, and power through grand scale, dramatic lighting, and, curvilinear forms. It replaced Renaissance balance with dynamic, complex spaces—often using oval shapes—integrating painting, sculpture, and stucco to blur the lines between art and architecture.

ARCHITECTURAL TERMS EXPLAINED

In the New Zealand context there are many well-documented examples of Baroque Revival architecture, most of which appear in the Edwardian Baroque phase (c. 1900–1925). Edwardian Baroque in New Zealand is generally treated as the local expression of the wider Baroque Revival movement, adapted from British imperial architecture and has a strong association with government, finance and civic authority.

Famous New Zealand Examples:

Building	City	Date
Dunedin Railway Station	Dunedin	1906-7
Old Public Trust Office	Wellington	1908-9
Parliament House	Wellington	1912-22
Auckland Ferry Building	Auckland	1909-12
Chief Post Office	Auckland	1912
Leys Institute	Auckland	1905-6
Dominion Observatory	Wellington	1907

HNZPT APPOINTS NEW BUT FAMILIAR CHIEF EXECUTIVE



Dean Whiting.
Photo / HNZPT

Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga announces the appointment of **Dean Whiting MNZM** (*Te Whānau ā Apanui/Farquharson*) as its new Chief Executive / Manahautū.

Adrienne Hannan HNZPT

Mr Whiting will move from his current position as Deputy Chief Executive Kaihautū Māori. Mr Whiting has been the Acting CEO since the completion of tenure of former CEO, Andrew Coleman, in 2025. As a long-serving staff member of Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga, Mr Whiting has led programmes supporting the protection, conservation, and celebration of Aotearoa New Zealand's heritage places, taonga and cultural landscapes.

In 2023, Mr Whiting was made a Member of the New Zealand Order of Merit (MNZM) for services to Māori Arts, recognising his significant contribution to Māori arts revitalisation and preservation. His work has included hands on leadership of the Māori Built Heritage Programme of Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga, and wide-ranging support and advice to Māori communities across the motu.

Mr Whiting has also served on the Boards of the Arts Council of New Zealand, the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) and worked as a project conservator for the Museum of

New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa. He is currently chair of the Tohu Whenua heritage tourism programme and leading the governance oversight of seismic strengthening and adaptive reuse of Turnbull House in Wellington. His long-standing commitment to strengthening the heritage sector reflects a future-focused approach to safeguarding both heritage places and our significant cultural landscapes.

Board Chair Dame Jo Brosnahan says the organisation is well-positioned for the future with Mr Whiting at the helm. "Dean's appointment marks an important next step for Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga. His deep experience, proven leadership and clear strategic focus give the Board great confidence as we enter a new phase of strengthening partnerships, supporting our people, and delivering on our long-term heritage responsibilities."

Edward Ellison, Deputy Chair of the Board and Chair of the Māori Heritage Council, warmly welcomes the appointment. "The legacy of *Te Māori* – the landmark international exhibition – lives on in this moment. Dean was part of the original cohort of conservators whose training was made possible by *Te Māori*, and he carries that whakapapa of heritage revitalisation into this role. It is deeply fitting that Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga is now led by someone shaped by that moment."

Mr Whiting brings deep organisational knowledge and a long-standing commitment to bicultural partnership under the Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Act 2014. His appointment marks a continuation of the organisation's strategic focus on ensuring sites and stories that are important to all New Zealanders are protected and revitalised for future generations.

About Dean Whiting MNZM

Dean Whiting MNZM completed a Bachelor of Applied Science in the Conservation of Cultural Materials (Canberra, Aus) in the late 1980s with a cohort of Māori students who continue to be regarded as New Zealand's leading experts in the conservation of traditional Māori arts. He has

worked for more than 30 years as both an independent conservator, Project Conservator at the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, and with Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga on the conservation of Māori cultural heritage. Dean was most recently the Deputy Chief Executive Kaihautū Māori for Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga,

and has served on the Board of Creative New Zealand between 2017 and 2022 and the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS). In 2023 he was made a Member of the New Zealand Order of Merit (MNZM) for services to Māori Arts.

AUCKLAND PC 120 UPDATE



Sally Hughes
Character Coalition

Hard-graft of heritage advocacy pays off for Auckland's Character Coalition

In the September Newsletter, we expressed our concerns about Auckland Council's Plan Change 120. This proposed removing over 4000 properties from what remains of Auckland's Special Character Areas. These pockets of wooden houses, mainly villas and bungalows and often built of kauri, are internationally significant, and greatly valued by Aucklanders.

By the closing date for submissions, 19 December, and despite the fact that this covered the busy lead up period before Christmas, Council had received over 10,000 submissions.

Character Coalition was one of many groups that made a submission advocating retaining the Special Character Areas intact. You can see our submission at: <https://bit.ly/4bg4UDP>

Our members were also active in advocating for their special character suburbs to their local MPs and we organised a community meeting in Mt Eden that attracted over 300 people.

The next step in the process is for Council to summarise the decisions requested in the submissions and publicly notify them, so that people have an opportunity to consider them and make further submissions supporting or opposing them.

However, although Council has not yet completed this work, on 19 February the Minister of Housing, Chris Bishop, whose legislation had required Council to change its Unitary Plan to provide for 2 million more zoned sites, announced that he was going to ease up on this demand.

Chris Bishop said he's heard loud and clear that Aucklanders are concerned about what plan change 120 would do, what extra housing means for them and how it will impact their suburbs.

The Government will legislate to soften the housing capacity requirement so that Auckland Council only needs to zone to allow 1.6 million new homes instead of 2 million.

The 1.6 million figure is still both unrealistic and unnecessary. Auckland only builds about 10,000-15,000 residences (houses, apartments and town houses) a year and so at that rate it is still over 100 years supply of zoned land.

Furthermore, Auckland already had an over-supply of residential zoned land, as can be seen from the many vacant sites around the city that have been zoned for intensification since the 2016 Unitary Plan that are lying idle and growing weeds.

However, we acknowledge that 1.6 million is better than 2 million and are pleased that this will allow Council to remove the intensification requirements from many sites which are not suitable for it.

We will be urging Council to include amongst those all the properties that it was going to remove from Special Character Areas. These will make up only a very small proportion of those being reinstated, and their ongoing protection from being demolished for, or surrounded by, apartment blocks of up to 15 stories high will make no difference to the availability or affordability of housing in Auckland.

In the meantime, the Plan Change 120 process will continue until the Government passes new legislation to clarify its changed expectations of Council. We will continue to prepare a case in support of our submission, as well as lobbying both Councillors and Auckland Government MPs to ensure our Special Character Areas are protected for future generations.

DÉJÀ VU FOR THE FORMER ŌPIKI TOLL BRIDGE



The Ōpiki Bridge with its original cabling. *Photo / Danny Harper*



Val Burr HP Manawatū-Horowhenua

In what has felt like déjà vu Historic Places Manawatu Horowhenua has once again been called upon to defend the Ōpiki toll bridge.

In late December last year the cabling for one side of the bridge collapsed into the Manawatu River. This was the same cabling that was uplifted from the river in 2023, when it dropped into the water.

The Ōpiki toll bridge has a Category I rating with Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga. When built in 1917, it was then the longest suspension bridge in New Zealand and gained further fame as our country's only private toll bridge from 1920 to 1969 when owned by the Akers family. Its engineer was Joseph Dawson of Pahiatua, who constructed some twenty suspension bridges around the lower North Island during the 1890s to 1910s. Most of these have now succumbed to age and heavier vehicle ratings.

Our society has argued that the cabling is essential to the understanding of the Ōpiki Bridge as a suspension bridge. But unfortunately the cabling is now over 110 years old and rust has set in. Over the past ten years we have seen cables be cut away and temporary repairs made with clips. Had we started sooner, it may have been possible to put supporting cables across the top – but at what cost and whose expense?



The Ōpiki Bridge in October of 2025.
Photo / Cindy Lilburn

The choice to remove the cabling was made after discussion between Horizons, the bridge owner and Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga.

The cabling is being held in reserve and after a lot of 'flogging old rope' by this committee, the Akers family and three local museums have all expressed interest in taking a sample for posterity.

We would like to thank the Horizons engineering team for their willingness to organise these snippets.

As you pass the bridge towers now, a chimney is clearly in view. This was for the Tane flaxmill – the reason for building the bridge in the first instance to transport flax across the river from the Makerua swamp on the Manawatu side. The chimney and flaxmill remains are also a protected historic site.

A HISTORY OF HPA: EXCERPT FROM DAME ANNA CRIGHTON MEMOIR



Dame Anna Crighton HPA Founding Member

*Dame Anna Crighton reflects on the formation of HPA in an extract from her memoir, **Still Standing**, published by Canterbury University Press in 2024.*

In February 2010, the Minister for Arts, Culture and Heritage, Chris Finlayson, announced a review of the Historic Places Act that would include the disestablishment of all New Zealand Historic Places Trust branch committees and elected board representatives. A ripple of disquiet, and in many instances anger, went through the heritage volunteer sector. Historic Places Trust members resigned in protest. The proposed legislative change would alienate the invaluable grassroots input of volunteers who had worked cooperatively with trust staff for some 50 years and affect hundreds of heritage advocates throughout the country. Half a century of hours spent, energy and enthusiasm would be wiped out with one stroke. I felt so strongly about what was happening that I pushed at board level, and received funding for, a Wellington meeting to be attended by two delegates from each branch, to decide on a way forward for the disestablished branches. At the July 2010 meeting, Finlayson said he was willing for the ministry to support the transition phase and was also open to negotiation on several matters, including resources for the transition.

This, however, did not happen. From the meeting came a decision to start a replacement organisation. The delegates did not want to lose the momentum of having a strong local voice for heritage in the regions. But where do you start with no membership and no funding? That's a big mountain to climb. Despite the massive challenge ahead, the group resolved to form a steering committee. With me as chair, there were David Kiddey from Wellington, David White from Central Otago, Jimmy Wallace from South Canterbury, Peter Dowell from Wellington and James Blackburne from Tairāwhiti.

Individually and collectively, through our respective talents and skills, we were in a position to lay the foundation for a solid and credible new non-government organisation. After more than two years of hard work, with regrettably negligible financial and human resource support from Historic Places, and relying totally on limited self-funding and goodwill, the steering group took Historic Places Aotearoa from an idea to a reality.



Dame Anna Crighton speaking at the launch of HPA at Government House in 2012. Photo / Supplied

The new organisation was launched in grand style at Government House on 14 August 2012. As patron Dame Anne Salmond put it, there would now be 'two powerful voices for the protection of historic sites and buildings in New Zealand': the Crown entity, the New Zealand Historic Places Trust (to be renamed Heritage New Zealand), and Historic Places Aotearoa, a non-government organisation 'able to advocate for historic sites and buildings without fear or favour'. The two would 'almost certainly work closely together'. In my address as inaugural president, I emphasised that Historic Places Aotearoa would retain the eyes and ears of those hundreds of regional volunteers who could have been lost. A strong voice to advocate for vulnerable heritage, not just from earthquakes and other natural disasters but also from destruction through inappropriate development, was immediate and necessary.

It was a turning point for New Zealand's heritage and marked a new beginning for local advocacy. The opportunity for communities to have a louder say in preserving their heritage for future generations was a return to the original spirit of heritage protection in this country. I was president of Historic Places Aotearoa from 2010 until 2013 and remained on the executive until 2015. Although the workload took its toll on me while I was coping with the aftermath of the Canterbury earthquakes, I am proud to have been a co-founder of an organisation that is still thriving.

When my role on the board of the New Zealand Historic Places Trust ended in 2014, after 11 years, I and other retirees, former chair Shonagh Kenderdine, Māori Heritage Council chair Sir Tumu Te Heuheu, together with board members Dr Apirana Mahuika, Gerard O'Regan, Allan Matson and David Kiddey, were given a formal farewell at the trust's Antrim House headquarters in Wellington, to thank us for our work and make us honorary life members of the newly minted Heritage New Zealand.

RANGITĪKEI HERITAGE HOMES



Merchiston in the Rangitikei. Photo / Leah Crisp



Leah Crisp
HPA Executive Member

Whanganui Summer Programme a hit with heritage home lovers

Heritage enthusiasts from all over the Lower North Island piled onto a bus in Whanganui on March 5, with several large Rangitīkei heritage homes on the agenda. No overcast day and possible chance of rain could stop these heritage lovers from having a blast!

It was the perfect excuse for this Heritage Voices newsletter editor to skip her first official week

back of the final semester of her heritage Masters at the University of Auckland! An educational trip? I think so!

The well-known John Vickers was leading our tour – a guide for heritage homes in the area for well over twenty years – which kicked off with a short stopover in Marton for coffee (or a spot of shopping!), before travelling down the road to the first house of the day, Westoe.

The Rangitīkei region had been hit hard by the Valentine's Day weekend storms, and this was clear to see by the rows of trees completely uprooted by the storm all over the district – with the gaping

holes in the ground left behind quickly seeming to become a special spot for many a sheep! Many of the expansive grounds of the properties on the tour had also been affected, including Frederick Jersey de Clere's *Overton*, rarely open to the public, and which was unable to host the busload – alas, another time!

The worthy replacement Westoe was built in 1874 for Sir William Fox, a colonial-era politician and four-times Premier of New Zealand.



Westoe with its Osborne-like central tower.
Photo / Leah Crisp

The Italianate-style house, designed by Charles Tringham, was supposedly inspired by Queen Victoria's Osborne House on the Isle of Wight – and once you see a glimpse of the imposing central tower from between the trees in the heavily wooded driveway, you would understand why!



Photos / Leah Crisp

The interior of the house (photos of the interior of all of these houses were not permitted, so you will just have to book your own tour, cope with my descriptions, or [peruse articles with pictures I've found!](#)) had been sympathetically redone by

owners Clive and Johanna Raharuhi when they moved from California to New Zealand, staying in an Managed Isolation and Quarantine (MIQ) facility, before making the journey to rural Rangitikei – a far cry from the hustle and bustle of wider Los Angeles.

A William Morris reprint wallpaper greeted the gushing guests as they made their way in the grand front door, and walked through the various original ground floor reception rooms and the not-so-original but still nicely in-keeping (on the interior at least!) self-contained apartment out the back.

In a scene straight out of *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition*, the chant of "Move that Bus" almost began, as capturing important photos of the exterior was initially hampered by the bus placement in close proximity to the door. That was soon remedied by this editor (you're welcome!) fortunately remembering how to operate a pullout handbrake in an older ute, and the obstructing vehicle was then moved to make way for the bus to be out of sight, but certainly not out of mind, as anticipation for the rest of the tour was too great!

The second house on our voyage was the majestic Merchiston (pronounced Merc-iston), which after travelling down the long and debris-ridden driveway (they were trapped on the property for two days after the storms) was truly a sight (and *site*) to behold!



Photo / Leah Crisp

As Debra Miller in *Homesteads: The Story Of New Zealand's Grand Country Houses* puts it, "Men figure prominently in the stories of most station homesteads. But the house built at Merchiston Station between 1906 and 1908 was the ambitious vision of Edith Hammond (née McKelvie)."

Designed by Joseph Clarkson Maddison and constructed between 1906 and 1908, Merchiston has been well-loved by the wider Hammond descendants since, with great-grandson Richard

Rowe and wife Vicki living there today, occasionally opening the house up to small groups of New Zealanders.

The fountain provided a stunning backdrop to eat our BYO lunch on the few tables and chairs set up outside, and impressively holds its own Category 1 Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga listing. Bought for only £30 at the end of the New Zealand International Exhibition, held in Hagley Park in Christchurch from November 1906 to April 1907 – a bargain from the £265 it cost when first commissioned – the fountain is carved with Oamaru stone by notable Christchurch stonemason, John Hunter.



Photo / Leah Crisp

The antics of Scottish Terrier Jock provided plenty of amusement for the group – this editor came back from the bathroom to hear strange noises from the nearby wisteria tree, only to do a double take (and double-check that it wasn't April the 1st) when I was told that Jock had climbed it!

The interior of Merchiston was as stunning as the outside, and a-typically, the beautifully tiled entry hall did not lead straight to a double-height stairhall, but instead to many large reception rooms, including a sprung-floor living room/ ballroom. This stairhall is positioned centrally in

the house – conveniently out of sight to visitors that in previous generations were encouraged to leave a calling card to arrange a later visit.

While all of the rooms were gorgeous heritage gems, one was entirely distinct – the billiard room with an 8-metre high stud. The strong connection between John and Edith Hammond and local iwi Ngāti Hauti is evident in this room (and across the rest of the homestead too) with beautiful carved wooden panels in the style of traditional Māori tukutuku – thought to be the only example of its kind in such a house.



Photos / Jane Ussher in Homesteads

The furniture is its own story within itself – an entire collection seeing the touch of each generation of guardians, with some truly stunning pieces in the thirty-five rooms of the house. To put these grand homesteads into context, only six are actively used by the Rowe's today.

Last but not least, was a surprise visit to guide John Vickers' own home, a Chapman-Taylor house named Woodleigh. The house was designed with no internal hallway, with access to the rooms off a central courtyard. Chapman-Taylor's iconic Arts and Crafts style is clearly evident throughout this house, most notably through the English-style leaded windows and their hand-crafted window stays with a certain flourish at the end, and the jarrah beams that frame each room. John and wife Sarah were natural hosts – even more remarkable in that the bus driving up to the house was the first time she realised they would be having visitors!

All in all, it was fantastic to be able to spend the day with more lovely like-minded people, including the younger enthusiastic new owners of Whangaimoana in Cape Palliser. For someone who has always wanted to do one of John Vickers tours after being jealous of my Grandparents Probus group doing one – I sure wasn't disappointed!

COATES MEMORIAL CHURCH RESTORATION PROJECT



Coates Memorial Church. Photo / Ministry for Culture and Heritage

Manatū Taonga Ministry for Culture & Heritage

An update on this stunning Northland restoration project

Coates Memorial Church is a national memorial to Rt Hon Joseph Gordon Coates, Prime Minister of New Zealand from 1925 to 1928.

Now 75 years old, the Church requires essential maintenance to extend its life and ensure it remains a place for the Matakōhe and New Zealand community to enjoy.

The church is cared for by Manatū Taonga Ministry for Culture and Heritage with support from the Coates Memorial Church Reserve Board.

An extensive restoration project began on 6 October 2025, and is expected to be completed by May 2026.

Update: 17 February, 2026

The restoration of Coates Memorial Church is now in its fifth month under the guidance of heritage architects Salmond Reed. Argon Constructors Ltd, the lead contractor, has completed all major works on schedule and has now vacated the site.

With the scaffolding and fenced compound removed, the public can once again enjoy an uninterrupted view of the church's exterior, and the significant restoration progress made to date.

Access to the interior of the church remains restricted while the final stages of interior work are completed.

Remaining Work:

- Installation of a new DVS system

- Restoration of surrounding grassed areas and gardens affected during construction
- Replacement of carpet and curtains
- Commemorative plaque polishing
- Installation of wayfinding signage
- Fit-out of interpretive information in the vestry.

The Church is scheduled to reopen to the public on 24 May 2026, with a Sunday service. Further details about this event will be shared in the coming weeks.



Restored exterior of Coates Memorial Church. *Photo / Blake Morris, Argon Constructors Ltd*

Access to the Church

To ensure public safety and minimise disruptions

during the project, the Church will be closed to the public until all works are complete. During this period the Church will not be open for visits or services, and it will not be able to take bookings for baptisms, weddings, or funerals.

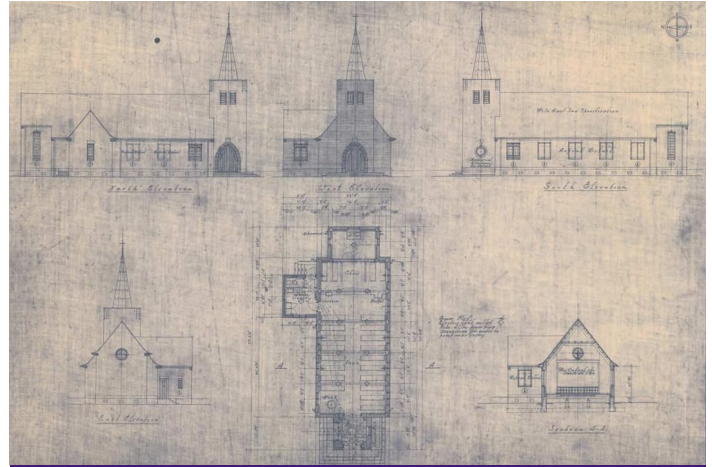


Photo / University of Auckland Archives

About Coates and the Church

Born in Northland, Coates was elected to Parliament in 1911. He served in the First World War, rising to the rank of Major and receiving the Military Cross and Bar. Following the death of W.F. Massey, Coates became leader of the Reform Party and Prime Minister in 1925. Though the party lost in 1928, he continued to serve as a respected minister in coalition and wartime governments until his sudden passing on 27 May 1943.

After consultation with the Coates family, the government commissioned this undenominational church as a national memorial to Coates. Designed by architect Horace Lovell Massey, it was officially opened by Prime Minister Sidney Holland on 27 May 1950.

For more information about the Coates Memorial Church, visit NZ History:

[Coates Memorial Church, Matakoho \(NZ History\)](#)

APOLOGIES

Our apologies to Jonathan Cweorth for omitting his name as a co-author of the article on the Ōtepoti Dunedin Heritage Festival 2025, contributed by the Southern Heritage Trust in our Summer Issue, page 18. Apologies also to Judith Burkin and Will Coop for inserting an incorrect photo of the Portland Island Lighthouse in their article in our Summer issue, page 14. The photograph has since been changed in the newsletter copy on the website.

HERITAGE

HE REO MO NGĀ TAONGA TUKU IHO

VOICES

2026 AUTUMN
NEWSLETTER

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