

HISTORIC PLACES

MANAWATŪ - HOROWHENUA

Newsletter of Historic Places
Manawatu—Horowhenua

Number 21 November 2023

The Voice of Heritage

A TRIBUTE TO MARGARET TAIT—by Cindy Lilburn and Dorothy Pilkington

Historic Places members in the Manawātū, Horowhenua and beyond were saddened at the news of the recent passing of Margaret Tate, aged 93, in Palmerston North.

Margaret joined what was then the Manawātū Branch Committee of the New Zealand Historic Places Trust (NZHPT) in the mid-1990s when she retired from her professional role as lecturer at the Palmerston North College of Education.

She had already made her mark in the promotion of local history through her involvement with the 1990 production at the college of the video *From Bush tracks to Broadway* and this carried through to the projects she was involved with for the NZHPT committee and the subsequent Historic Places Manawātū-Horowhenua committee.

Margaret was outwardly a gentle person, kind and generous, but also firmly principled. She did not hesitate to speak out when she perceived injustice or inequity and followed through with resolute support for groups and organisations that aligned with her philosophical stance.

For this reason, one of the projects she most relished in her work for NZHPT was the signage for an information kiosk on the 1930s Palmerston North State Housing area, Savage Crescent. She subsequently enjoyed acting as guide to a number of Labour politicians when they visited the precinct.

Her achievements are numerous and varied.

Margaret spent many months searching out the story of the WWII conscientious objectors' camps at Shannon. Her research has highlighted a previously little-known part of local history and has engendered much greater awareness of this aspect of the war story.

It was Margaret who compiled the inventory of local listed historic places that is still a well-used feature on the Palmerston North City Library heritage website.

Her interest in the 1950s era houses of Bernard Cox, Palmerston North's first modernist architect, led to her writing a meticulously researched brochure that remains a valuable resource.

She also urged and assisted efforts to summarise the local flax industry in signage.

In all cases she has been generous in ensuring the results of her research are deposited in local archives to be accessible to all.

As an educator, she was an ardent believer in life-long learning. In addition to the NZHPT she was co-founder and contributor to the *Manawātū Journal of History*, now in its 19th year, which has given a voice to the region's heritage stories.

More recently she was coordinator for the history group of the University of the Third Age, encouraging others to take up the challenge of adding to their knowledge about the past.

Over four decades Margaret gave generously her time and knowledge in the interests of promoting local heritage. She is greatly missed in the heritage community of the Manawātū and beyond.

This article has been supplied by the following authors:

Cindy Lilburn is chair of Historic Places Manawātū-Horowhenua and is Collections Manager at Te Manawa Museum, Palmerston North.

Dorothy Pilkington, MNZM, author and historian chaired the former New Zealand Historic Places Trust Manawātū Branch Committee for many years, and now resides in Napier.



HISTORIC PLACES AOTEAROA CONFERENCE 2023, NEW PLYMOUTH

The two days of our conference were held at the Taranaki Anglican Cathedral complex, formerly known as St Mary's. Built in 1845 the Cathedral it is New Zealand's oldest stone church and classified Category A by Heritage NZ. The church has been extended several times since all in the same Gothic style and stonework. It has been closed to the public for seven years after being declared an earthquake risk.



We were treated to a talk by the architect on the proposed remediation work though as she commented about cost, 'how long is a piece of string'? The church currently has double skinned stone walls inside and out but with no ties between them. To hold the walling together the church will pump a special grout down in-between, hammer vertical rods into the top then tie these tight with a concrete ring beam round the top of the walls. Then to the roof which will have steel beams inserted and disguised over the top of the existing wood ceilings. Finally the whole east wall of the church with its large stained glass windows will be de-constructed and re-built. You can only wish St Mary's good luck in this endeavor. The project started formally this October. The finish date is unknown depending on obstacles they might meet on the way.



The larger complex which now includes the new Te Whare Hononga visitor centre, opened in April this year. Translated, the name means 'the house that binds' and has been deliberately designed to acknowledge the local hapu of Ngamotu / New Plymouth, the Ngati te Whiti.

The centre is built from natural woods with stained glass slit windows depicting Mount Taranaki, local rivers and the islands off Ngamotu. The walls inside have kowhaiwhai patterns and early European images of New Plymouth. The building was a requirement as part of the government's \$20 million funding towards the Cathedral renovation. It has proven controversial for its modern wood style close, some would say too close, to the stone Cathedral.

Much of our conference was held in the former Vicarage for St Mary's also on the Cathedral site. This is a Victorian two-story house which was moved forward on the site for a car park behind and has now been converted to open plan downstairs.

We had earlier been taken on a walk around the historic Cathedral churchyard whose occupants were half and half local dignitaries and the gravesites of the military killed during the Taranaki Wars in the 1860s. At the opposite end of the site in front of the vicarage is now a new bronze sculpture, unveiled in April at the opening of Te Whare Hononga. The three metre long bronze tiki / adze head by artist Rangi Kipa honours six Waikato chiefs who joined Taranaki tangata whenua during the same 1860s Taranaki Wars and were buried there after their deaths in battle. Their leading chief was alternatively known as 'Te Toki'.

Your chairwoman grew up just around the corner from St Mary's so I was able to lure three fellow conference participants for a quick tour around nearby sites. The Cathedral stands on the seaward side of Marsland Hill, originally the Maori Pukaka Pa which was lowered 15 metres for the Marsland Hill military barracks in the 1860s. The barracks were Nissen hut-like structures made of corrugated iron. They have now been re-constructed as the North Egmont Mountain House on Mount Taranaki and are probably the oldest surviving examples of corrugated iron in New Zealand.



The top of Marsland Hill is sadly a wind-swept grass plateau with a miscellany of monuments scattered across it. Chief is a statue of a soldier on a plinth behind tall railings marking the 1860s Taranaki wars. I cannot recall any commemorations in my childhood focused on this memorial. But the Edward VII Coronation fountain has waltzed in my lifetime from the hill down to the centre of town then returned when the traffic-free central city mall was removed.

Right next to Marsland Hill is the former New Plymouth Prison. Built in the 1870s it has a foreboding two story high stone wall with windows only at the entrance. The prison has a Category 1 rating from Heritage NZ. As well as general prisoners, it should be recognized for its place in rainbow history being the only

New Zealand prison used from 1917 to 1952 for those convicted of homosexuality. The prison has been closed since 2013 and land-banked for the past ten years pending a decision on its future by Te Ati Awa iwi.



Several blocks away is the former Barrett Street Hospital, home of the city's public hospital from the 1890s to 1950s. Over the years since most of the buildings have been demolished except for the massive two-story nurses' home constructed in the 1920s. As the hospital was built on the site of Otumaikuku Pa it has been returned to Te Ati Awa iwi. The iwi wishes to redevelop the 7-hectare site without any impediments; however the nurses' home has been listed in the New Plymouth District Council Plan and Historic Places Taranaki

are still keen to preserve the place. The building has been allowed to run to rack and ruin over the past decade and has problems with asbestos contamination. It is difficult to imagine what a viable future could be – luxury hotel or apartments perhaps?

Final talk of the conference was the results of an Auckland University planners' survey. The results are currently embargoed but suffice to say, future planners will be heavily focused on climate change, environmental effects and working with Maoritanga.

We would like to thank Historic Places Taranaki for organizing this conference together with the Local History Month and being such welcome hosts. 2

Historic Places Aotearoa AGM

HPA currently has 9 member organizations including Historic Places Manawatu-Horowhenua. These are societies paying capitation of their fees and who have voting rights. The member organizations now cover most of New Zealand except for Northland, Bay of Plenty, Waikato, Nelson-Marlborough, Otago, Southland and the West Coast. There are also 14 associated societies paying \$50 each, but without voting rights, up from 9 last year. Please note, any like-minded heritage societies, museums etc. can join free for their first year.

Financially, HPA has roughly \$27,000 in assets with an annual income of roughly \$12,000. Last year it spent all but \$300 of this revenue due to the conference in Auckland but the more typical year before generated a \$2,800 surplus.

HPA's activities over the past year have included:

- Produced four quarterly newsletters
- Held regular video meetings with chairs of its member and associated organizations
- Continued working relationships with HNZPT [Heritage NZ Pouhere Taonga], ICOMOS NZ [International Committee on Monuments] and NZAA [NZ Archaeological Association] including Heritage Leaders Forum video meetings
- Continued to liaise with Ministry for Culture and Heritage on the reform of the Resource Management Act
- Set up a new website for HPA
- Held a two-day Heritage Conference in Auckland with wide range of policy-makers and heritage leaders attending

They are also pleased to report that the government has developed a new 'Policy for Government Management of Cultural Heritage Places [2022]'. This puts much greater onus on central government ministries to care for historic buildings and sites in their portfolios particularly once they are land-banked. The dilapidation of land-banked places was a major issue raised in a 2018 nationwide survey of heritage organizations. Government legislation got there, eventually. Unfortunately it does not include regional councils who fall between the legislative cracks of central and local government in being required to care for their heritage.

Heritage Week talk – "Whose history is it?"

This panel discussion was the opening event for Taranaki's Local Heritage Month. HPA conference-goers were welcome to be there and on the night it attracted a full room of over 60 attendees.

Andrew Coleman of Heritage NZ began the event with the its policy that Heritage NZ honours the past to inspire the future. However heritage organizations it could be debated, tend to focus on settler history hence why archaeology is important. The history of many sites is layered and often underground. With this in mind, any Heritage NZ listing or property acquisition now must include an assessment of its Maori heritage.

Liana Poutu is a lawyer and the current Pouwhakarae (Chair) of Te Kotahitanga o Te Atiawa Trust (the entity responsible for managing Te Atiawa's Treaty Settlement). She commented for Maori, history is their life experience. Individuals have the right to tell their own stories, whether for Parihaka this may be the story of Maori or descendants of militia.

For Liana, history was the intangible – the telling of stories. Heritage was the tangible and visible. She instanced the Te Ati Awa Treaty of Waitangi settlement. Te Ati Awa want to be able to decide what happens to, for example, the unused and unusable Barrett Street Nurses Home on their former pa-site. But could you recognize history without being tied to heritage, such as their own iwi's dilapidated meeting houses?

Massey University lecturer, **Richard Shaw** is author of a 2021 book, "The Forgotten Coast" on the unravelling of his family's Taranaki story, in particular their link to the Parihaka campaign there. The family mantelpiece held a photograph of his great-great-grandfather in the militia rugby team. GGG Grandad was an Irish immigrant in the 1870s who became part of the occupying force at Parihaka for the four years from its invasion in 1881 then a farmer on confiscated Maori land. But by now his settler family did not know about its unsettling past, hence Richard's book. "My story, mine to own, mine to tell".

Peter Adds from the School of Maori Studies, Victoria University and of Te Ati Awa whakapapa took a dynamic view of history. History he commented is a matter of ownership and control, for instance, in the Foreshore and Seabed Act. Controlling the narrative matters. History is constantly being revised and reconsidered, often by current values with heresy becoming orthodoxy. Narratives about the past can be weaponised to disparage people such as the story that Maori willingly signed the Treaty of Waitangi, and if repeated often enough becomes the truth. So should Maori stories / history be by Maori, if non-Maori wish to work in this area and their research can be illuminating?

Finally, Liana explained that Te Ati Awa, as with Rangitane did not receive land but money in their Treaty settlement. They have first right of refusal on any Crown land-banked properties but this must be acquired at standard market rates. Most of this land has been vacant and Te Ati Awa has chosen to on-sell any purchased properties to finance what they really want.

She also commented that in Treaty negotiations the history is that which has to be agreed to by both sides. In Crown documents for instance, Te Ati Awa were not permitted to use the terms 'war' or 'rape' in relation to Parihaka. The Crown has sanitized the past in its official settlement records.

At the end, to quote Peter Munns: "History is not what we think it is, it is what we think it is"



Last Chance to Purchase! 'Manawatu Music Makers' is the focus of the Palmerston North Heritage Trust's 2024 calendar. The calendars, which feature historical images from Manawatu's past, are now an annual fixture, having been produced since 2010.

Themes have included public celebrations, images from Manawatu childhoods, transport, trains, our animal heritage and, for the anniversary of women's suffrage, 'women's choices'. For 2024, an eclectic range of photographs celebrate music makers, teachers and promoters in a range of contexts. There are dance bands and brass bands, singers and buskers, and musical instruments from recorders to the Opera House's grand piano - surrounded by an admiring group of music teachers.

Please do support heritage by purchasing a calendar: they are sold at cost and are now becoming collectors' items. Information on how to purchase is given in the poster below. Note that by simply making a phone call to our lovely heritage staff in the Library, you can arrange to pay for your calendars via bank transfer, and to have them posted out.

(Image on the poster is of Pompey Durie's popular dance orchestra playing in the PDC ballroom in the 1940s.)

Heritage in 'Back Issues'

Over the past couple of years, each Saturday the *Manawatu Standard*, has published a section termed 'Back Issues', where local historians, including members of your committee, write about a historical topic.

These topics have been wide-ranging, but Val Burr has been especially productive in producing well-researched pieces on historic buildings and places in our area. She wrote, for example, about the Centennial Pavilion (now the Kelvin Grove Community Centre) on 24 September 2022; on historic hitching posts around Palmerston North and the importance of horse transport on 6 May 2023, and on the Palmerston North train station on 21 October 2023. Margaret

Historic Places Manawatu Horowhenua Membership Subscription

Thank you for supporting Historic Places Manawatu Horowhenua through your membership. We value your membership and invite you to renew your membership.

If you have not been a member before, we welcome your membership and involvement in the Society.

Historic Places Manawatu Horowhenua is registered with the Charities Commission

Names (family members):

Address:

Email address:

Telephone:

Annual membership runs from 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024

Individual membership	\$20	\$
Family membership	\$25	\$
Donation		\$
Total		\$

Payment: By direct credit to the Historic Places Manawatu Horowhenua's bank account: 15 3977 0028377 00 with your name as reference, or mail to The Treasurer at 231 College Street, West End, Palmerston North 4412

Tennant's article on Caccia Birch was published on 23 April 2023.

Look out for other articles yet to come. Even if you don't subscribe to the *Standard*, you can check out 'Back Issues' on-line on Stuff.



Professor John Dunmore features in the Caccia Birch article, as president of the Caccia Birch Preservation Society, formed in 1967. Caccia Birch was at that stage very run down and in danger of demolition.

Image: *Manawatu Standard*, courtesy Stuff.

HISTORIC PLACES MANAWATU-HOROWHENUA COMMITTEE

President: Cindy Lilburn cindy.lilburn@xtra.co.nz

Secretary: Margaret Tennant

Treasurer: Nick Watson

Committee: Don Irvine, Ian Robertson, Margaret Tennant, Val Burr.