



NEWSLETTER

APRIL 2011

WHAT NOW?



West side of Manchester St between St Asaph and Tuam Sts

Over the past 45 years, the Christchurch Civic Trust has faced many demanding challenges, but without doubt, there are few equal to what lies ahead in the years to come as result of the February earthquake. The destruction that has been wrought in the inner city to both heritage and character buildings, as everyone now knows, has been huge.

We also know that many buildings have been demolished in haste without a thorough assessment being carried out, leaving more empty spaces in streetscapes than should have been necessary. Since the 1960s heritage and character buildings have been slowly disappearing and the recent event has just speeded the demise of what was left. The real challenge for the Civic Trust is to work hard to ensure that no more damaged heritage buildings of are lost.

The recovery and rebuilding of the central business district will be a slow process that may take years, if not a generation.

It is very likely that over time, the whole notion of a central business district may no longer be a tenable option. Business practice in an age dominated by electronic communication does not require a central city location. For years there has been a drift of commercial activity to business hubs outside the centre.

There is also the reality that life patterns have changed and not longer is it necessary for Christchurch citizens to gravitate to the city centre to shop or transact certain business in the way they once did.

A new identity for what is the old city has to be contemplated.

Awakened seismic faults beneath Christchurch means that temors will be a regular occurance in

the future, and over time, this clearly indicates that the identity of Christchurch will have to be entirely different.

In many respects this event and the circumstances of modern living is providing an opportunity for the heart of the city to be renewed.

A whole replanning will be required and in that planning it may be determined that the inner city might return to looking more like it did 150 years ago, with inner city housing, more precinct gardens and open green spaces. A place with some shopping, but the heart of the city in the future may be cultural not commercial; a place for living and for giving visitors a good experience of what a real garden city should be. The challenge for this or any other kind of vision is immense, but there is little doubt that some kind of vision is needed if we are not to follow one disaster with another.

Your Ideas

Many members will have a viewpoint on the inner city's recovery and future. We would welcome hearing what you have to say and publish your ideas the next newsletter.

Any written opinions you have can be addressed to the Secretary of the Trust at Box 1927 Christchurch or sent by email to:
secretary@christchurchcivictrust.org.nz

Lecture Series

The scheduled Winter lecture series has had to be cancelled because of the difficulty in securing a suitable venue. However, a Spring series is being planned. If you have any suggestions regarding possible speakers or topics please contact Jacqui Smith at Ph 351 4492.

Fund Raising Auction

The fundraising auction planned for May has had to be postponed, but will proceed later in the year, as the Trust still has in excess of \$40,000 to raise

Chairman's Report

The Board met recently on March 27. Some Board members have been displaced from Christchurch but we are confident of the Trust continuing to make a difference in what our city will look like.

As Mike Crean wrote in The Press recently when praising the Trust:

"...It became the conscience of the city wherever the future of a heritage building was in question" (150 reasons to love Canterbury 15/03/11)

The Trust has been involved in a new group known as IconIC (Interests in conserving the Identity of Christchurch), which has been meeting regularly since March 8. This consists of local and national politicians, heritage advocates, building professionals and building owners. The group has had regular access to the Civil Defence Controllers. What we have been stressing to the authorities is that the central city will not be viable if wholesale demolition is allowed to continue. Access to buildings to allow shoring up has been the most recent focus. As the recovery process moves onto the CERA phase, IconIC will look to be involved in how the new city will evolve.

I have been invited to address the Wellington Civic Trust AGM in early May on what is happening in Christchurch in the aftermath of February's earthquake. Other chairs of Civic Trusts will also be there. This is the culmination of quite a lot of contact in recent years between Trusts throughout the country. There is talk of forming a more structured alliance between all the nation's Civic Trusts.

The 2007 publication *City and Peninsula* recording the heritage buildings of Christchurch and Banks Peninsula is still available on the Trust website or by contacting Lindsay Carswell. The price is \$50 which includes postage. This is now a valuable record of what has been lost in the earthquakes.

The AGM is likely to be held later in the year than usual, probably in June. We will get another newsletter out before then. I hope that you will all continue to support the Trust in these trying times and that you will remain safe and resilient.

Timothy Hogan
Chairman

Art Centre Closure

Members will have heard through the media recently, and will no doubt share with some concern, the decision made by the Christchurch Art Centre management to terminate all tenancies, some of decades standing, including that of the Dux de Lux. Although it is detached from the main complex and even though the owner of the Dux de Lux, Richard Sinke, believes building repairs can be made within 6 months, and his business of 33 years could be up and running before the end of the year, management have refused to entertain any exception to their ruling.

What is not realised is that the Dux de Lux has been an entertainment attracter bridge between the cultural precinct and the CBD for years.

The stubborn determination to close the Dux de Lux down is deliberately working counter to the efforts of the Christchurch City Council to try and bring more people, including tourists back into the city.

The Civic Trust believes that some ongoing activity on the Art Centre site is better than nothing at all and the board fully supports Richard Sinke in his attempt to persuade the Art Centre Trust otherwise.

If you also agree we would urge you to sign the online petition : www.saveourdux.co.nz

The sad reality is that once the Art Centre closes its doors completely to the public, they may not open again for years and when they finally do we may find a centre no longer dedicated to the arts and artists but more to commerce.

Sydenham Heritage Lost

When the Sydenham Heritage Trust was formed in 2001 it had as its main objective to restore the Sydenham Heritage Church and then focus on the retention of character commercial buildings on Colombo St. However, the 4 September quake damaged many including the Sydenham Heritage Church and then the 22 February quake identified many more casualties.

Whilst it looked bleak, the Sydenham Heritage Trust was confident that at least church would be saved, despite the further damage it had suffered, but the unauthorised demolition on 24 February put paid to that.

The scene in Sydenham now that most of the other commercial character buildings have been demolished is exceedingly grim and it can be only hoped that with some visionary planning, the area will be once more revitalised.

Even though almost all of Sydenham's heritage has been lost, the Sydenham Heritage Trust is not



The remains of Sydenham Heritage Church

abandoning the cause and will continue in a new direction.

At present options remain open, but the Trust is considering building a Sydenham Centre, for community use, where the church once stood that will also include a museum space to acknowledge and celebrate Sydenham's lost heritage. If this idea is realised stone and other materials salvaged from the site, including stained glass, will be incorporated in a new building.



Colombo St Sydenham A bleak prospect

Ron Fussell

The Civic Trust Board has regretfully accepted the resignation of Ron Fussell.

As many members will know Ron was elected to the Civic Trust Board in 1980 and was Chairman from 1989 to 91. Before joining the Trust, Ron was chairman of the Environmental Vanguard organisation, (EnVo), following the death of Dr Helen Hervey. After several years in that role, he approached the Civic Trust with Envo members support to suggest an amalgamation. In 1981 the Civic Trust agreed that this would be mutually beneficial to both.

Unfortunately Ron's living situation was badly affected by the quake and he has now moved to Nelson with his wife, to be closer to family.

We wish him all the very best for the future.

OBITUARIES

Ian Wilson

The Civic Trust would like to acknowledge the passing of former Board member Ian Wilson on 24 January at age 80.

Ian Wilson was on the board of the Civic Trust for a total of 20 years. First between 1966 and 1983 then 1987 to 1989.

Although he was born in Wellington Ian Wilson lived in Christchurch for most of his adult life.

He studied engineering at the University of Canterbury in the late 1940s, and was for many years a well known consulting engineer and partner in the firm of Davie Lovell -Smith.

Ian Wilson was also involved in Jaycees and became an active supporter of the National Party. He had many other private interests including, flying, acting for childrens' theatre, tramping photography and astronomy.

.Harold Francis

Another valued Civic Trust member, Harold Francis, also passed away recently. Harold was born in Christchurch in 1915 and was educated at Christchurch Boys High School, where the principal recommended him for a job in the office of the AMP Society.

The second World War allowed him to serve his country in the air flying Sunderlands and other flying boats, as well as training pilots for the RNZAF.

He continued this service with the RAF in Singapore and the UK from where he retired in 1958 and returned to his hometown and the company that he had first worked for.

This was the beginning of very successful career as an insurance agent, which he only gave up when his wife needed his support in her battle with cancer.

Harold used his business skills to provide financial advice and generous gifts to many worthwhile organisations and Christian Charities.

His family of 4 children, 9 grandchildren and 11 great-grandchildren had a great love and respect for him, while his friends enjoyed his company on the golf course and the bowling green.

He passed away on 15 March 2011, aged 96.

New Members :

The Civic Trust welcomes the following new member: Rae Ewing.

Changes of Address

As the Civic Trust is currently updating its membership database we would request that any members who have moved or changed their telephone number or email address advise the Secretary Lindsay Caswell.

He can be contacted by either

phone on: 3894819 or

e mail: secretary@christchurchcivictrust.org.nz

The views expressed in this publication are not necessarily those of the Christchurch Civic Trust

