



# Newsletter

MAY 2009

## THE FUTURE PROTECTION OF OUR CITY'S HERITAGE IS A REAL ISSUE



### Occidental Hotel Hereford St

When walking or driving down Hereford Street East over the past eighteen months, many Civic Trust members will have noticed the gradual and seemingly orchestrated dilapidation of the historic Occidental Hotel in Latimer Square. The state of the Occidental Hotel, built in 1861, is alarming and serious, but what is most concerning is that it is not an isolated situation, as similar instances of neglect by negligent owners of both listed and unlisted heritage buildings exist throughout our city and seems to be proliferating with greater regularity.

It is apparent that more stringent measures need to be put in place to ensure that, when a listed heritage property such as the Occidental Hotel is purchased, there is an understanding on the part

However the neglect of the Occidental Hotel right, in the heart of the city, is particularly significant in that it highlights a whole raft of issues surrounding heritage protection that Christchurch City Council is seemingly unable to cope with at present, or has insufficient powers in place to fully meet its obligations under Section 6 of the Resource Management Act. This clearly states that a body corporate like Christchurch City Council has a duty, under that Act, to protect the city's heritage for its present and future citizens.

of the buyer that he or she has entered into a kind of heritage covenant that insists that there is ...

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## CHAIRMAN'S REPORT



The Board, on behalf of the Trust, will make a submission this month on the City Council's LTCCP 2009 – 19, with regards to the Hagley Oval, heritage conservation and the extension of the city tram route. We believe that the Hagley Oval is not an appropriate venue for Test cricket. We will support the Council's increase in funding for heritage retention. Our comments on the tram will centre on the wider transport issues within the city centre.

The Arts Centre Board has shared with the Civic Trust Board, preliminary drawings of an initiative from Canterbury University for a new Music School, to be erected on the Hereford Street carpark. The underground carpark is expected to proceed, whereas the new building to replace the Registry extension has been put on hold. The Arts Centre Board is close to finalising its masterplan, which will set these proposals within a coherent framework and vision.

We are continuing to press the Council to make the heritage review of the City Plan a priority. The Mayor has intimated that the work will be completed this year and that the Trust has been identified as a stakeholder for the initial consultation process.

Marette Taylor has instituted, over the last three months, a successful lecture series for members, which have been held at the South Christchurch Library. A further series is planned to run through the winter months June to August. A flyer will go out to members when speakers are

finalised.

A quotation for the development of the new website has been accepted by the Board, subject to sponsorship being obtained. Currently, we have three funding applications being considered by various charitable organizations and are hopeful that one of these will be successful so that the design work can begin.

Further refinement of the Civic Trust Constitution has been completed after changes were not passed at the AGM in 2008. These amendments will be circulated to members and presented to the AGM in May for adoption. Thank you to all those who took an interest in this work. The updating of the document involves legislative changes made since 1965, the categories of membership and the make up of the Board. In all other respects the spirit and the intent of our founding document is retained.

Tim Hogan  
Chairman

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...an obligation to maintain the property in such a way as to not let it deteriorate, or place its safety in jeopardy through deliberate neglect. If a property is perceived to be willfully neglected, in the hope that it will hasten an opportunity to demolish it, then Christchurch City Council should have powers to prosecute or, at the very least, impose heavy fines on such errant owners until they recognise their heritage obligations. At present no such conditions are imposed, as it would be deemed an infringement of the owners' property rights and that there are adequate measures in place already under the City Plan. This is certainly not the case, even though Christchurch City Council has activated a mechanism, which, on paper, should provide some protection.

In 1998, the Christchurch City Council adopted the charter of the International Council of Monuments and Sites, New Zealand (Te Manu o Nga Pouwhenua o Te Ao) ICOMOS. This provides, in spirit, a protection for all listed heritage buildings places and objects in accordance with the Long Term City Plan. The current plan, 2006/14, states that it is a key objective to make Christchurch the most attractive city in New Zealand and for the Christchurch City Council to become leaders in protecting our natural and built heritage. There is also an objective to protect and promote appreciation of Christchurch's listed heritage buildings and therein lies a key problem for the future.

Currently the Christchurch City Council has under its City Plan, four listed group categories: Group I determines that the protection of such listed heritage buildings, that are of national and international significance, is deemed essential and ensures that the strongest measures will be used to prevent loss to our local communities and the nation. In contrast, the Group II listing may identify buildings, places and objects of national and regional importance that should be protected, but that protection is only possible 'where this can be reasonably achieved'. Under Category III there seems to be very limited protection for listed heritage buildings, as this grouping only involves, on the part of the Christchurch City Council, a contribution to be

made to protect - again, 'where this can be reasonably achieved'. When we come to Group IV, there is absolutely no imperative when a heritage building is considered to be of local significance, to do anything more than encourage its retention.

Such a group classification means that every heritage building without a Group I categorisation is potentially vulnerable and could eventually be lost. It is essential that this kind of graduated heritage system be reviewed in line with the notion of the single categorization, as recently advocated by the town planning specialist and Trust Board Deputy Chair, Dr E.G. (Ted) Pryor. He rightly maintains that a heritage building is either considered worthy of saving or it is not and that all listed heritage buildings should be Group I only.

Dr Pryor also is a strong advocate of the reinstatement of character groupings of heritage buildings to create heritage precincts within the inner city, something that, until 2004, was a feature of the City Plan. Clearly, if such advocacy were accepted, the threat to a heritage building such as the Occidental Hotel, as part of the Latimer Square Heritage precinct, would potentially disappear.

## **CIVIC TRUST AWARDS**

**2009**

Members are invited to nominate recent, outstanding heritage and environmental projects to be considered for an award later this year by the Civic Trust.

Nominations close on 31 July 2009

Please address your nominations to:

Civic Trust Awards 2009

P.O.Box 1927

Christchurch 8041

### **The Aidensfield Development, Halswell**

Earlier last year the Civic Trust was pleased that the historic Aidensfield Farm buildings would be saved from demolition, but now it seems that because of a new developments they are once again very much under threat.

A recent Environment Court decision has decided that as the farm buildings were incorrectly located on the City Plan and, therefore, they are not protected from any future development by the current owner. The Civic Trust Board feels that it is vital that the Christchurch City Council appeals this decision in the High Court and will be asking for this to happen. What is particularly alarming about this situation is that such an error on the City Plan may not be an isolated case and there may be other heritage sites that could be similarly disadvantaged in the future.

### **Hagley Park Oval**

In September 2008, a seminar to consider the draft Metropolitan Sports Facilities Plan was held by Christchurch City Council. Included was a proposal from Canterbury Cricket to use the Hagley Oval as a venue that is able to hold first class fixtures and test matches. To facilitate such a change in use, considerable modification would have to be made to the Hagley Oval, as we now know it. If this were to proceed, a fence would likely be erected and, possibly, earthworks leading to the formation of an embankment would have to be put in place.

The Civic Trust is very opposed to such a radical departure from the accepted use of Hagley Park and will be carefully monitoring this issue.

### **Ernle Clark Reserve Victory**

Many members of the Civic Trust will have read with some relief in March, that Christchurch City Council has agreed to purchase for an undisclosed sum, a unique stand of trees including some rare native specimens, for the benefit of not only South Christchurch, but the City as a whole. This rescue from destruction and a housing project at the hands of a developer, is a victory at a time when, more often than not, property developers get their way. Its achievement is a great credit to all those who campaigned, petitioned and lobbied so

vigorously.

The Civic Trust first became aware of the threat to this unique 5000 square metre area of woodland when it was brought to the attention of Board members at the August meeting, by Civic Trust member, Lynn Wicks, a key campaigner on the issue. In response, the board unanimously gave its wholehearted support and the chairman Tim Hogan subsequently wrote to all Christchurch City Councillors, endorsing and encouraging acquisition of the Ernle Clark Reserve for Christchurch.

### **Sydenham Heritage Trust Amenities Block Now Completed**

In the October, 2008 Civic Trust Newsletter, mention was made of the Sydenham Heritage Trust's new amenities block project. Since the foundation of the Sydenham Heritage Trust seven years ago, an amenities block that includes a kitchen and toilets, has been seen as an essential prime facility for the viable use of the Sydenham Heritage Church.

Building commenced in December 2008 and completion on these building facilities was made in February of this year. On 24 March, a function was held to thank all those who contributed to this major advance in achieving the Trust's long-term project plan. The building was officially opened by Crs Sue Wells and Barry Corbett.

The Sydenham Heritage Trust is pleased to announce that the Sydenham Heritage Church is now available for community hire. Anyone wanting to hire the church is asked to contact Dorothy Haywood by email: [dorothy1@xtra.co.nz](mailto:dorothy1@xtra.co.nz) or Phone 338 5412.



**Sydenham Heritage Church's new amenities block being opened by Crs Sue Wells and Barry Corbett**

## **Heritage Action Trust Aotearoa**

In May of last year a several disenchanted heritage supporters held an informal meeting to discuss some of the serious problems being faced by heritage, at present and the apparent fragmentation throughout New Zealand of Heritage groups. It was felt that for these to be more effective an organisation that took on the role to coordinate these under a national federation needed to be formed.

During the monthly meetings that followed a decision by a steering committee was made to form a trust to be called the Heritage Action Trust Aotearoa.

This Trust was formally launched on 21 April and announced publicly its aims and objectives which include:

- Encouraging cooperation between different organisations involved in preserving the historic and cultural heritage of New Zealand by the provision of a communication network to foster the sharing of skills and information and to provide a representative voice on heritage issues.

- Advancing the education of the public in relation to the historical and/or architectural significance of buildings and/or sites and any threats to them.

- Fostering recognition that the protection of historic and cultural heritage makes a significant contribution to current social, educational, environmental and economic needs and wellbeing.

- Encouraging high standards of planning and design so that new developments enhance rather than detract from the country's historic and cultural environment.

- Improving the ability of heritage charities to achieve efficient and effective fulfillment of their objectives.

- Promoting the efficient application of resources for heritage purposes by non-charitable institutions and organisations concerned with the protection, preservation, improvement, enhancement and/or revitalisation of the historic environment.

It is hoped that the Heritage Action Trust will be able to be proactive and add a new stimulus to the cause of heritage retention for the future and be able to galvanise the disparate Heritage groups to create a greater force.

## **Where is our Art in Public Places Heading?**

This is a question that could reasonably be asked as a result of the most recent funereal sculptural incarnation at a premier site on Worcester Boulevard, right in the heart of the cultural precinct. It is not just the merits of this kind of public art for Christchurch in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century that should be queried, but the way it has come about.

On 19 March a private function was held in a very public space to unveil the busts of 12 notable Cantabrians, who are either recently deceased or advancing in years. This initiative by the 'Local Heroes Trust' was developed with the full approval of the Christchurch City Council and the Christchurch Art Centre Trust Board. There was no public consultation as to the individuals who were to be depicted in this dodeca-composite or any discussion on the appropriateness of its siting.

By sanctioning this private installation in a public space, the Christchurch City Council has effectively created a precedent for any individual or group to do the same again in the future, should they so choose. The local authority and its Art in Public Places Committee seems to have been echoing what is happening to our built heritage and has adopted a similar laissez-faire attitude toward public art.

Sadly, while the 'Hero' busts were being installed, the distinctive pavement neon work 'Circuit' by Peter Roche (2004) was badly damaged when a truck ran over it. We are reliably advised that it will be remade but may not return to its original site. It is hoped that it will be reinstated and not join the casualty list of other sculptures such as Rosemary Johnson's 'Clouds', Jim Allen's 1974 Commonwealth Games wind sculpture, Laurence Karasek's original Stewart Fountain (initiated by the Civic Trust) and more recently, Fiona Gunn's 'To Cyper' - all public art works that have been scrapped. The removal of the controversial 'The Reintroduction of 'The Fabulous Races' by Bing Dawe and Noel Gregg, after 16 years on Worcester Boulevard, is yet another ominous disappearance and it is hoped that its storage will not eventually lead to its also being discarded.

### **Another Heritage Loss**

Another piece of inner city heritage has been lost, following a now too common pattern - a victim of neglectful owners' inactivity to save it and vandalism.

The distinctive early 1870s two storey house at 281 Cambridge Terrace, just a few hundred metres from Christchurch Central Fire Station, was gutted by fire for a second time recently and with a \$1,000,000 land value, will soon, no doubt, become a vacant site. The property was the last survivor of the line up of gracious homes that once graced this part of Cambridge Terrace in the late nineteenth century. Over a period of 2 years the Civic Trust and Christchurch Heritage Trust tried to negotiate with the owner of this

property to save it from the fate that has now befallen it, but this was to no avail.



281 Cambridge Tce

Members and intending members are invited to attend the

## **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

**On Thursday 7 May at 5.30 pm**

**Hurst Seager Room**

**Christchurch Arts Centre**

**Guest speaker: Jessica Halliday**

**Recording Architecture**

### **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING GUEST SPEAKER**

**DR JESSICA HALLIDAY**

The guest speaker this year at the AGM will be Dr Jessica Halliday who is an independent architectural historian currently working on a New Zealand architects Oral History project at the University of Canterbury.

Jessica Halliday introduces the pleasures and perils of recording the histories and memories of New Zealand's oldest living generation of architects with specific reference to, (and excerpts from) her recent interview with Don Donnithorne.

**The Resource Management Bill 2009**

Phase one of what will become a much wider review of the Resource Management Act 1991, we are advised, is aimed at 'simplifying and streamlining' what is currently considered to be a cumbersome process in dealing with Resource Consents.

The outcome, according to the Bill will 'reduce the incidence of vexatious and frivolous appeals' and courts will be able to seek costs and award indemnity costs. The Bill fully acknowledges that by imposing costs it will act as a disincentive against making appeals, but this means that before making an appeal, an organisation like the Civic Trust will have to provide security of costs. Clearly driven by politicians, the ramifications of this change for the appeal process are quite serious; they directly challenge the democratic rights of citizens throughout New Zealand to oppose projects and developments that are seen to be in the long term detrimental to either the natural or heritage environment.

The Resource Management Act 1991 is currently the principal statute for the management of the use of natural and physical environment. Whilst there are aspects of it that are contentious, it has provided a measure of protection for the past 18 years which may be slowly eroded away once the full range of amendments planned are rolled out.

**Amendments to the Constitution**

At the 2008 AGM the Trust announced its review of some clauses in the 1965 Civic Heritage Trust Constitution and Rules. As there was some difficulty with having some of the amendments approved at that meeting, these will be presented again for approval of the membership at the AGM on 7 May.

**Website**

In order to bring us into line with contemporary practice the Board has begun investigations to establish a website for the Civic Trust that will provide not only information about the Trust but will enable members to be kept updated on the activities of the Trust. Eventually it is anticipated that the Newsletter will be also available on line. We will keep you posted on the website project's progress in the months ahead.

**New Members**

The Trust welcomes the following new members;

Garry Holden, Early Settlers and Pilgrims Association.

As we are always interested in recruiting new members, we would ask current members to pass on a their copy of the Newsletter to others who may like to join (a membership form is at the bottom of this page).

New intending members should not feel that because they subscribe they have to become involved and if they do not want to be, donations are welcome and tax deductible.

**CHRISTCHURCH CIVIC TRUST**

P.O.Box 1927 Christchurch 8140

**Name**.....

**Address**.....

**Contact Nos Tele**..... **Email**.....

**Occupation**.....

**Skills which may be of value to the Civic Trust**

.....  
.....

**Signature**.....

**Individual membership \$20**

## THE CHRISTCHURCH CIVIC TRUST EVENTS CALENDAR

- May 5 Trust Board Meeting
- May 7 **Annual General Meeting**  
5-30pm Hurst Seager Room Christchurch Art Centre
- June 2 Trust Board Meeting
- June 12 Lecture 12.30pm South City Library  
[ Topic and speaker to be announced]
- July 1 Trust Board Meeting
- July 10 Lecture 12.30pm South City Library  
[ Topic and speaker to be announced]

### The Trust Board

**Chairman:** Tim Hogan

**Deputy Chairman:** Ted Pryor

**Secretary:** Lindsay Carswell **Treasurer:** Bruce Alexander

Cory Bedford, Ian Clark, Anne Dingwall, Ronald Fussell, Joanna Mackenzie,  
Neil Roberts, Murette Taylor, David Thornley, Prue Wignall

Contacts: The Secretary 389 4819

The Chairman 366 3322

The Christchurch Civic Trust P.O.Box 1927 Christchurch 8140



**Views expressed in this publication are not necessarily those of the Christchurch Civic Trust**

