

"all the appearances of being innovative": New Zealand architecture in the 1970s:

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ABSTRACTS

Ellen Anderson "Tuku iho, tuku iho: Conserving Māori Built Heritage"

The National Historic Places Trust was established in 1954, and by the 1970s it was apparent that there was a need to engage with Māori communities in a way that was more appropriate for the iwi, hapū, and whanau groups that cared for their architectural taonga. By the mid-1970s a special focus group within the Trust known as The Māori Buildings and Advisory Committee was tasked with providing *"financial grants and technical advice to help local people in the restoration of their own buildings."* The early phase of the committee's existence was characterised by two key issues; supporting the conservation of marae buildings across the country; and developing its own framework around how to identify, categorise, and attribute importance to Māori architecture.

Cliff Whiting is well known for new work on marae during this period, but at the same time he was progressing the development of Māori architecture on the marae, he was also working on conservation projects through an ongoing role with the Historic Places Trust. This paper will look at some of the earliest Māori built heritage conservation projects undertaken, many of which are being revisited now by the current Māori Built Heritage Team of Heritage New Zealand.

Adrian Humphris & Geoff Mew "Fearsome horses: the nightmares that wrecked Lambton Quay"

The 1970s saw an unprecedented wave of building demolition along the western side of Lambton Quay as well as in other parts of central Wellington. A 1972 survey carried out by the City Corporation identified buildings they determined to be at risk of collapse in a moderate earthquake, with "A" being the highest risk category. Those classified as "A" were then targeted for demolition.

The survey followed a Chamber of Commerce discussion paper produced in November 1971 that was concerned with future regional development. As a result many small buildings were replaced with fewer, much larger tower blocks. These tower blocks were built to maximise returns on investment according to the size of the footprint (with little or no regard for aesthetics). Although some were completed in the 1970s, others were not topped off until the 1980s.

This paper evaluates the reasons for the apparent sudden upsurge in awareness of "awesome forces," the publicity given to the survey, and the likely outcomes for building owners. It traces the building history of a varied selection of "at risk" commercial premises; a few of which have survived - at least partially in facade form - and some of the buildings that succeeded them.

At the time there seems to have been little historical consideration or awareness of what was being lost, and strengthening options were seldom explored in depth. Hence many varied three- to five-storey buildings erected in late Victorian and early Edwardian times were irreversibly pulled down to be replaced by characterless, anonymous and overbearing tower blocks.

Nigel Isaacs "The 1978 mandatory requirement for thermal insulation in housing: keeping warm by numbers"

The 1977 Budget announced there would be mandatory requirements for thermal insulation in new homes. Government loans had already supported the insulation of over 50,000 homes, but fewer than 1 in 5 new homes were being insulated despite the 1972/3 international "oil shock" and the recent New Zealand electricity shortages. Legislation was introduced in November 1977 and by 1 April 1978 thermal insulation became the norm instead of being found mainly in the houses of the well-off. Local authorities implemented the change through their by-laws and the use of NZS 4218P:1977 "Minimum Thermal Insulation Requirements for Residential Buildings." The "P" meant "Provisional" but it was not until 1996 that NZS4218 was revised and promulgated. The paper will explore the development of the legislative requirements, the analysis leading to the final requirements which combined physics and economics, and the implementation through by-laws and the Standard. The practical implementation in new housing required more than just new rules. The availability of suitable thermal insulation materials, trained builders or specialist installers and an educated public will be examined. The consequences of many of these decisions remain today – in the current NZBC thermal performance requirements as well as the legacy of drier, warmer homes.

Christine McCarthy "Concrete architecture"

This paper will look at the celebrations of concrete apparent in the Brutalist architecture of the 1970s. It will particularly examine Toomath's Karori Teacher's College, Chris Brooke-White's CIT campus in Heretaunga, Upper Hutt, and Ted McCoy's additions to Otago University (namely the Archway Theatres and the Hocken Building). Concrete is understood on these sites as textures as well as spatial articulators. Helmut Einhorn's consideration of concrete surfaces for the Wellington Urban Motorway, Charles Fearnley's 1975 *Where have all the Textures gone?* and Joanna Paul's 1972 *Motorway*, will provide the prime theoretical context.

Roy Montgomery "I love A-frames, they are cool ... and practical as ordinary housing despite the fact that few of us still think this way"

The frame hut, roof hut or A-frame as it is variously known is probably one of the earliest forms of fabricated rather than carved or excavated of human shelter. It is an intuitive design that children will make or draw in rudimentary representations of a home or a refuge of some kind. A-frames are also immensely popular as back country accommodation whether as private, club or government designs. As dwellings for temporary or seasonal occupation in often harsh environments they are a cheap, practical solution. That there was a fad for them in the 1950s and 1960s in North America is evidenced by frequent articles in magazines such as *Popular Mechanics* and their regular appearance in home design publications such as Sunset Books' *Cabins and Vacation Houses* (1967). They reached their apex in New Zealand, so to speak, in the 1970s with the mass production of A-frame "chalets" by McRae Homes in Timaru which could be ordered in kitset form and which appeared in many towns and cities in the South Island as domestic and holiday dwellings. For the past thirty years, however, they have been seen by many as a joke or a folly that belongs to the 1970s like flares and kaftans; great for a party but not for everyday use. A book written in their defence, Chad Randl's *A-frame* (2004), has hardly changed that perception. In this paper I argue that the A-frame has much more of merit to it than meets the eye and that there are good reasons for "back-importing" A-frame elements into ordinary house design for the present and future in an environmentally-challenging country such as New Zealand.

Roy Montgomery "Missing the point(y bits): the superior architecture of Roger Walker and B. W. Mountfort viewed from an evolutionary perspective"

A preoccupation with surfaces and a primary concern for the building as a solid object still clouds our understanding of architecture. This explains the almost pathological need to relocate a later movement back to an earlier one. In the context of New Zealand architecture, the 1970s is merely a gaudier colonial throwback to the woody colonial throwback that couldn't get past the novelty of the Middle Ages. In this paper I argue that if there is a connection between these "styles" it is grounded in a sensibility that is driven not by whim. Instead, this sensibility is driven by human evolutionary requirements that have not changed greatly in approximately two million years. Using prospect-refuge-hazard theory, after Appleton (1996), and the Kaplans' (1984) complexity, coherence, mystery and legibility tetrad, I attempt to demonstrate that the architecture of both Roger Walker, technical design flaws notwithstanding, and Benjamin Woolfield Mountfort offer exemplars of superior design for human habitats. Emphasis is placed upon the "affordances" created by their works and their sense of space within space.

Vivienne Morrell "Centrepont to Centrepointless: Roger Walker's Masterton shopping arcade (1972 to 1997)"

Centrepont was the name of a shopping arcade that opened in Masterton in December 1972. It was designed by Roger Walker (b. 1942) and commissioned by Ron Brierley and Robert Jones Investments as one of several shopping arcade developments they were making in various places in New Zealand at the time.

Centrepont featured 21 small shops opening from a brick-paved courtyard, with a prominent viewing tower on the corner. It had signature Roger Walker elements, such as round pipe windows, steep roofs, and bright colours. Despite being described just before its opening as "Masterton's biggest 'happening'," in 1997, it was demolished. After looking at the opening of Centrepont, this paper will consider some possible reasons for Centrepont's failure.

Alongside this record of architectural loss, I consider how something that is still within the memories of many people (but no longer there to check) is remembered and sometimes mis-remembered. These are two of many comments that appeared on a popular Facebook page in 2015 in response to a photograph of Centrepont:

"Loved that building. many a good memory. Should still be there; a brilliant example of 70's design."

"It was pretty hideous as was much of the 70's. Food at the cafe was always good though."

Tyson Schmidt "further proof of the robust nature of the local economy"¹: macroeconomics as architectural driver of Palmerston North's Central Administration Building

The Central Administration Building in Palmerston North is often rated the ugliest building in the city. Dreamed of at the start of the 1970s, it was seen as eventually being the physical manifestation of Palmerston North's big city status (once Hamilton had been defeated). By the time it was completed at end of the decade it was a monument to austerity, having survived rampant inflation and central Government controls, and proudly declared as a "solid, practical unobtrusive building."² This paper explores how the macroeconomic conditions of the 1970s shaped this transition from dream to practical necessity.

¹ "Editorial," *Tribune*, August 22, 1976, 1.

² "Civic Centre. City proud of huge concrete structure" *Dominion* (15 December 1979):15.

Ben Schrader "Residential E and the saving of Thorndon"

The advance of Wellington's urban motorway from the late 1960s not only sliced through sacred ground – the Bolton Street cemetery – but also severed the heart of historic Thorndon. Some 400 houses were bulldozed and a Modernist plan for the construction of numerous blocks of flats threatened still more. This prospect led a group of residents to form the Thorndon Society to advocate for the suburb's built heritage. After much lobbying it succeeded in 1973 in getting the Wellington City Council to apply a radical zoning designation over part of the suburb. Called Residential E, it protected the area from wholesale redevelopment, a New Zealand first.

This paper examines why and how Residential E came about. It explores the motivations of the Thorndon Society and others involved in the process. It asks why public interest in preserving a historic district emerged in the 1970s and not before. Finally, it considers some of the legacies of the regulation. Did protection come with a price?

Gary Whiting & Tyson Schmidt ""You can't sell a marae": campus innovation at Massey University"

Te Kupenga o te Matauranga marae is located on the former Massey University Hokowhitu Campus in Palmerston North and has the distinction of being the first marae built on Crown land. A national hui on Māori Education was held at the Hokowhitu Campus (then Teachers College, not yet Massey University) in 1974 and it was here that Charlie Maitai challenged the then principal Pat Whitwell to build a wharenui on the new campus. That challenge was complete by the end of the 1970s. In 2015 the marae was sold by Massey University to a local developer as part of a wider real estate site package.

This paper explores the innovative genesis of Te Kupenga o te Matauranga marae and how it came to be sold as an University asset some 35 years later.

Peter Wood "I Claudius: A nostalgically-charged evaluation of Claude Megson's heyday in the 1970s"

Along with Ian Athfield and Roger Walker, Claude Megson emerged in the early 1970s as an idiosyncratic architectural iconoclast utterly committed to the New Zealand house. However Megson's legacy has taken a different course to his compatriots. Unlike Athfield and Walker, Megson had no literary champion to promote his significance (it might be said he had his own voice for that). Moreover his relatively early death in 1994 curtailed his architectural activity but there was little indication in his work by then that he would either continue to reinvent his approach to housing in the manner of Walker, or grow the grow his scope and scale of his work like Athfield. By the mid 1970s Megson had formed a rigid approach to domestic work that underpinned – and probably limited – his activities as an architect and architectural educator. His certainty on this matter also polarised opinion on his personality. You were obliged to be either with or against Claude, and this dialectical distinction has not endeared him to researchers. In this paper I wish then to evaluate the historical significance of Megson in three interlocking parts. The first concerns his personal mythology as an architect hero in the manner of Frank Lloyd Wright (a narrative real estate agents are quick to promote his work). The second part is found in an analysis of his actually houses from this period with particular attention given to his masters dissertation. The final aspect I wish to weave through is his presence as a dominant personality, but a rather

marginal teacher, at the Auckland School of Architecture into the 1980s. This will not be a particularly scholarly or academic appraisal. In keeping with the complexities and paradoxes that underpinned Megson's character, what I hope to do here is to provide a sketch for further scholarship on one of New Zealand's most intriguing architects.