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# DEVONPORT HERITAGE

## SPECIAL MASONIC TAVERN EDITION

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**DEVONPORT  
HERITAGE**  
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[http://devonportheritage.org  
/index.html](http://devonportheritage.org/index.html)

## Continuing the Battle for the Masonic

An Environment Court hearing that will decide the future of the Masonic Tavern is set down for December this year. Devonport Heritage, along with the Masonic Friendly Society and two neighbours, has appealed against the North Shore City Council's decision to permit the re-development of the hotel and surrounding site. This is the first time that Devonport Heritage has taken an appeal through to a court case and we have done this because we believe the heritage value and cultural importance of the Masonic will be lost if the proposal goes ahead.

In April the Council gave consent for Redback Develop to demolish the non-scheduled parts of the Masonic in order to construct four apartments and a café within the footprint of the historic building and to build a further six new apartments and an underground carpark on the remainder of the site. Consent was also granted to move the old boarding



house elsewhere on the site and restore the scheduled facades of the tavern. We have appealed to the Environment Court because the consent will mean the demolition of the Masonic hotel and reconstruction of the facades fronting King Edward Parade and Church Street, thus leading to the effective loss of one of Auckland's oldest buildings.

While we are not opposed to some re-development on the site, the current proposal involves demolition and removal of the historic building with only fragments of the present building being retained thus paying only lip service to the national importance given to heritage protection by section 6(f) RMA. We also believe the scale and design of the new apartments will overwhelm what is left of the original building and so detract from its historic significance.

Because for fifteen years Devonport Heritage has strived to protect our heritage buildings, we felt that we could not sit back and allow this significant heritage hotel to be eliminated. In this we have not been alone. The Masonic Friendly Society was formed with the express purpose of opposing the re-development proposal, so it was logical that we work together to mount our appeals. We have been hugely grateful for the energy and skills of their members. Devonport Heritage has not taken the decision to appeal to the Environment Court lightly. It is a massive undertaking and for the last six months we have spent a huge amount of time and

resources putting together a strong, compelling case. We have united with the Masonic Friendly Society to engage Paul Cavanagh QC as our counsel and Brian Putt as our resource management consultant. We have also enlisted some of the best expert witnesses in their fields: Caroline Phillips archaeologist, Graeme Burgess heritage architect, James Lunday urban designer

and our own Susan Yoffe, historical researcher. They have examined the re-development plans and produced in-depth reports that detail the history of the site and how the proposal fails to protect the heritage qualities of the Masonic tavern and the surrounding site. Much of the evidence also highlights the loss of business-zoned land, as the development will convert most of the site to residential development, which we believe contradicts the District Plan objectives and policies for the Business 1 zone in Devonport. Excerpts from the witnesses' evidence is listed in the following pages.

We have also had our case bolstered by the support of the Historic Places Trust which has joined the appeal as an interested party and will present its own specialist archaeological

(cont on p4)

**Please Support****Devonport****Heritage****THIS YEAR WE NEED  
YOUR SUPPORT MORE  
THAN EVER.**

In order to pay for the important heritage campaigning work we do, Devonport Heritage has introduced an annual subscription. This fee is \$10 but feel free to donate more since this year Devonport Heritage is facing the biggest fight since our inception.

Each year we contact our members on various issues and occasions. We will continue to do this, and in addition, we intend:

- to produce two newsletters each year to keep you informed,
- to continue to keep all of you informed via our website.
- To welcome you to our regular monthly meetings, held on the last Wednesday of each month between February and November. These are held in Devonport library's Meeting Room.

Do please support us by either:

1. sending a cheque for \$10 (or more!) made out to Devonport Heritage Inc, and addressed to:  
Membership Secretary,  
Claudia Page,  
Devonport Heritage,  
PO Box 32 044  
Devonport Post Office. or,

2. You can also pay directly into our bank account which is:

ANZ Bank  
Acc No: 01 0137 0127504 00  
To Devonport Heritage  
Do please add a personal identifier as reference.

**Thank you for your continued support.**

**THE EVIDENCE IN BRIEF**

(some excerpts of interest)

**THE ARCHITECTURAL CONSERVATION EVIDENCE**  
Conservation architect, GRAHAM BURGESS

The Masonic Hotel building as it stands has exceptional cultural heritage significance. It is one of very few surviving hotel buildings from the 1860s in New Zealand and was one of the grandest hotels of that period. It has associations with the most prominent early citizens in Devonport, and was the place at which many community activities, political, sporting and social, took place from 1866.

The Hotel building has a high level of historic authenticity. Historic photographs clearly demonstrate that its form has not significantly changed since the 1880s and that the additions made at that time retained the 1866 form of the hotel as part of its new overall composition. This is remarkable for a timber building of this age. It is the only surviving building of this type on the North Shore and is one of very few in the Auckland region.

The overall form and structure of these major sections of the building survive and are, on external visual inspection, in excellent condition for their age.

The current council scheduling does not reflect the true heritage values of the Masonic Hotel and its environs and its application as proposed would result in "mock" heritage protection.

In my experience work of the scale proposed, with the associated requirements to construct new foundations, to strengthen structural walls, and, in this instance to construct fire and acoustic separation, will almost certainly result in the demolition of most of the 1866 section of the scheduled area. It is simply not possible to keep a slice of the building and to carry out works to achieve a major change of use without destroying most of the scheduled fabric and in this instance sacrificing all its remaining heritage fabric.

With regard to the future development I consider that it is possible to develop the overall site provided that this can be done without destroying the Masonic Tavern. I do not consider the works within the Masonic Tavern or the aspects of the proposal that propose demolition of the nineteenth century hotel building to be appropriate.

The retention of such limited areas of the building, particularly those parts that have been significantly modified, will result in a mere reconstruction of the skin of the building and this does not enhance the true heritage value of this place. A reconstruction is not a restoration and the reconstruction of the street frontage is almost meaningless in heritage terms without the retention of the bulk and form of the entire building.

**THE RESOURCE MANAGEMENT EVIDENCE**

Resource management consultant Brian Putt, believes the proposal contravenes several of the objectives and policies of the district plan.

*In effect the proposal seeks to use the property in a manner which is simply not contemplated by the district plan and would be better dealt with by way of a plan change to give a more appropriate forum for the review of all the physical, social, cultural and economic issues that arise in relation to this site.*

*In my opinion adverse effects that are beyond remedy or mitigation arise from*

*the over-intensive development form. (of the proposal) In particular there is an assumption that the Business 1 zoning of the site can be used for a high density residential purpose without considering the effects this may have on the loss of retail frontage and on neighbouring properties and the neighbourhood in general.*

*.....Clearly in my opinion a development opportunity exists on the site, but it must be one that is respectful of the Residential 3 zone, the Business 1 zone and the exceptional heritage characteristics that arise from this building and its place within Devonport and Auckland as an important historic building*

## THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE

Archaeological Consultant, Dr Caroline Phillips

Caroline Phillips says early Maori were attracted to what is now Devonport because of the good soils, fresh water and good canoe landing sites. The area gave easy access to fishing and coastal transport routes.

- The high peaks of the volcanic cones provided good defensive positions and lookouts commanding a wide view of the Waitemata. Maori occupied the area in the vicinity of the Thwaites property (Masonic site) from the earliest times. Evidence of occupation has been recorded immediately to the east, and it is possible that further similar evidence may be present on the property itself.

- 18 archaeological sites including, including the two stone working floors, the three garden sites and the five named volcanic cones and

peaks have been recorded in the Takapuna area.

- Close to the Thwaites property the hill of Kurae-a-Tura was occupied and traces of food refuse still exists on its slopes.

Immediately to the east of the Thwaites property, in what is now the Church Street road verge, a human burial was found, recorded as R11/4204.

- If the wider property contains evidence of early Maori occupation it would have local and regional archaeological significance.

If further koiwi (human remains) were found it would have high cultural significance.

- I would further add that the archaeological investigation of any buried remains throughout the Thwaites property and the recording of the built structures during controlled demolition or relocation could be expensive.

## THE URBAN DESIGN EVIDENCE

Urban Designer James Lunday is concerned the proposal will cause the loss of precious business zoned land in Devonport:

*In Devonport there are many residential dwellings. There is a scarce and limited commercial base. It is this mixed use that defines the very nature and character of not only good urban design, but of the historic suburbs that reminds us of the true building blocks of community.*

Mr Lunday says the Masonic sits at the centre of a cultural circuit from the Wharf along the waterfront to North Head, Torpedo Bay wharf, with links to Cheltenham Beach and back via Mt Victoria. He calls it the urban equivalent of the Routeburn Track and its economic viability must be sustained

*....History teaches us that communities change, adapt and move forward. The commercial zoning of the site goes to the heart of creating a sustainable and vibrant centre, and any watering down*

*of its ability to perform as a vibrant commercial node undermines the sustainable development of the community of Devonport.*

*....The Redback proposal not only weakens the perception of the Masonic as a landmark by making it homogenous with the adjacent new development, but it destroys the activity which creates the node - continuous retail frontage. The apartments are an alien form that has occupied the body of this commercial area. They have no place here on the ground floor; perform no unique function and provide nothing extra that is not available in the wider urban residential fabric.*

*The Jasmax proposal tears the guts out of the historic building and tarts up the façade. The building gets subsumed into a mass of residential development. It loses its literal meaning, its reason for being and becomes an extension of a residential area. Forever condemning the ability of this site to regenerate and robustly perform a variety of duties over time and secure its roles as a major node in this historic borough.*

## THE BEGINNING— A SHORT EXTRACT FROM MASONIC HISTORY

The Daily Southern Cross reported in April 1866 that amongst the many houses being built on the North Shore was, 'Mr Beddoes' large house on north road intended for a hotel. The cottage, which formerly occupied the site, has been removed to make room for



Figure 11. Frederick Cock's brief adventure into hotel management at the Masonic Hotel soon after his arrival in Auckland, was marked by his enthusiasm for hospitality and his wife's excellent cooking. He was a Mason which may be how he made the connection with George Beddoes the owner. The enterprise was not successful. He took up farming a Paeroa and was prominent in political and church life.

the more pretending building'. (sic)

The hotel hosted an event in July 1866 and the newspaper description of the building and facilities took 10 column inches. Amongst the adjectives used were 'handsome and commodious' and 'in point of architectural merit one of the finest buildings erected on that side of the Waitemata. The quadrangular figure attracts

notice by its architectural consistency as well as the beauty and harmony of details in its construction. The proprietor has spared no expense in rendering it a first class hotel.'

The official opening was celebrated on 29 September 1866 with a sumptuous dinner hosted by Mr and Mrs Cook for, 'the principal residents at the North Shore'. The chair said that the building of such a building would hasten the progress of development in the area. In his reply Mr Cock said that he was not intending to cultivate a bar trade but would rather make visitors and their friends comfortable.

Newspaper advertisements emphasized the conveniences and sanitary conditions for families and invalids. 'Families and gentlemen seeking a temporary retirement from the turmoil of commercial life, will here find attractions unequalled within so short a distance of the city: while to invalids it offers especial advantages, .....

The NZ Herald report likewise extolled the superior accommodations suitable for families. In fact 30 gentlemen had sat down to dinner at 7.30pm and, 'as the weather was unfavourable those residing in Auckland stayed the night.' They enjoyed the commodious appointments. The panels and ceilings with polished kauri.

FROM: A HISTORY OF  
THE MASONIC, BY  
SUSAN YOFFE.

(cont from p1)

and architectural evidence to the court. While the present plan proposes to get rid of the ugly filled-in veranda facing King Edward Parade and rebuild the front facades to look something like the original, the rest of the hotel, the north and west walls and the roof, will be pulled down.

What we will end up with is a rebuilt street frontage that will be attached to a completely new building – effectively a fake front attached to a fake rear and side. Some of the original windows and front door will be all that will remain. The community will be left with a replica which does nothing to retain the real character, amenity and heritage qualities that the property at present enjoys. The proposal anticipates the loss of the community tavern, a well supported community asset.

This is not genuine restoration, nor is it an appropriate way to treat a building of the historical worth of the Masonic. To anyone who sees only a tired old building with some unsympathetic additions, I urge you to imagine the bottle shop and other additions removed, and the whole building repainted and restored. The Masonic should remain as a waterfront icon in Devonport supporting the heritage route from the ferry terminal to North Head and the new National Naval Museum. There it would sit, on the beautiful waterfront where Devonport's European history began, still proudly a part of this community after 144 years.

Finally, we believe that there is now an imperative for the owners of properties which have significant heritage attributes to ensure their protection unless it can be clearly demonstrated that for economic and other valid considerations, that is not an option. When an owner seeks development rights that would not otherwise be available, restoration of a building such as this could be seen to be part of the price to pay for that privilege. This city has lost so much of its heritage, we must not allow one of the earliest hotels, that was built when Grey was governor and Queen Victoria reigned,

Many people ask why the Masonic has not been covered by the Residential 3 heritage protection rules which apply to most of the older houses and buildings in Devonport.

The simple answer is that the hotel sits in a business zone and heritage rules do not apply.

When the North Shore City Council drew up its District Plan in 1994, it gave the Masonic Tavern and the Boarding House its highest A classification on its Schedule of Heritage buildings.

However the present owner objected and the Council removed all protection, opening the way for almost complete demolition of all buildings on the site.

It was left to an under-resourced lobby group like Devonport Heritage to fight for the survival of this historic building.

We appealed to the Environment Court in 1998 and after lengthy and difficult pre-case negotiations and with no support from Council, we finally agreed to a proposal to list only the front facades of the hotel. This was a desperate attempt to save at least something of the hotel from certain demolition.

The thinking behind heritage protection has changed over the years and such facadism is no longer acceptable.

For several years we have lobbied the Council to review and update its heritage schedule which would have enabled buildings like the Masonic to be reviewed. Finally this year the Council has decided to do this (too late for the Masonic).

So for ten years Devonport Heritage has been trying to get not only recognition of the heritage value of the Masonic Hotel, but has also been fighting for its very survival.

Without our intervention ten years ago it would probably have long since been demolished.

be destroyed to make way for more apartments. Shouldn't we as individuals and as a society, have more respect for the people that built our communities and take more pride in our own history?

People all over the world honour their past – why can't we?

BY CHAIRPERSON OF  
DEVONPORT HERITAGE,  
MARGOT MCRAE

### FUND-RAISING ACTIVITES

Together with the Masonic Friendly Society we are planning two major fund-raising initiatives for which we need your input and support.

The first is a **MONSTER GARAGE SALE** and this will be in November or December. We will have a collection point and urge our supporters to contribute to this.

We would like you to contribute the following donations of items in saleable order (no junk please): furniture, sports gear, fabric, bric-a-brac, toys, collectibles, linen, jewellery, electronics, garden items,

We are happy to collect your items. To arrange collection call Diana 445 6129 or e-mail [admin@savethemasonic.org](mailto:admin@savethemasonic.org)

The second fundraising event we are organising is a **DEVONPORT HOUSE AND GARDEN TOUR**. This is scheduled for early next year.

We will circulate the confirmed dates for each of these events as soon as we can. In the meantime, please help us with our appeal costs. Deposit your donations online, (and remember your personal identifier for reference) to:

ANZ Bank  
Acc No: 01 0137 0127504 00  
To: Devonport Heritage.

**Thank you for your continued support**