

## GOOD CONSERVATION AND RESTAURATION PRACTICE FICHE

Composed by working party of:

NEW ZEALAND

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### 0. Name of building/ group of buildings/ urban scheme/ landscape/ garden & picture of before and after

Futuna Chapel



Depicted item: Futuna Chapel  
Sources: Julia Gatley / Paul McCredie  
Dates: 2007 / 2015

**0.1 accessibility**

*opening hours/ viewing arrangements: Identity of building/ group of buildings/ group of buildings/ landscape/ garden*

Regularly open to the public on the first Sunday of the month. Tours and bookable events to resume after chapel reopening March 2026.

- **Data for identification**

current name: Futuna Chapel

former/original/variant name: n/a

address: 67 Futuna Close [off Friend Street]

city: Wellington

province/ state: Wellington

post code: 6012

country: New Zealand

geographic GPS coordinates:

current typology: REC

former/original/variant typology: REL

comments on typology: A former Catholic retreat chapel that is now located within a residential development and is available for public visits and events such as weddings, recitals and presentations.

- **Status of protection**

protected by: Wellington City Council

grade: n/a

date: 6 July 2006

valid for: whole building

remarks: Statutory protection is provided by council scheduling (as above) whilst heritage recognition is accorded by Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga listing as a Category 1 historic place (# 7446) since 28 May 1999.

## **1. History of building(s)**

- **Chronology**

Commission date: June 1958

design period (s): 1958-59

start of site work: July 1959

completion/inauguration: opened 19 March 1961 (Feast day of St Joseph)

- **Relevant persons/organizations**

original owners/patrons: Marist priests and lay brothers of the Society of Mary

architect: John Scott (1924-92)

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landscape/garden designer: Megan Wraight (2011)

other designers: Jim Allen (sculptor); the Stations of the Cross, Christ crucified figure. Allen also designed the colour and pattern of the acrylic windows and designed the light modulators above the entry doors.

consulting engineer(s): n/a

building contractors: Construction was led by foreman Brother Joseph (Xavier) Kelly, with assistance from carpenter Ray Thornton. Labour provided by the Brothers of the Society of Mary.

- **Other persons or events associated with the building(s)/site**

names: Futuna Chapel Trust; previously known as Friends of Futuna Charitable Trust

association: Charitable trust established to buy and conserve the chapel to prevent its demolition in 2003.

events: trust established (2003); registered (2008); renamed (2024)

period: since 2003

- **Summary of important changes after completion**

type of change: Ceramic tile mosaic panels installed above side altars.

date(s):1965

circumstances/reasons for change: adornment

effect of changes: visual enhancement

persons/organisations involved: W.R. Hampton & Sons of Christchurch, makers

type of change: alterations to altar platform and tabernacle

date(s):1969

circumstances/reasons for change: liturgical

effect of changes: altering functionality of chapel

persons/organisations involved: Brothers of the Society of Mary

type of change: northwest reflection pool demolished

date(s):1987

circumstances/reasons for change: unknown

effect of changes: loss of overall integrity

persons/organisations involved: Brothers of the Society of Mary

note: pool was rebuilt at a later (unknown) date.

type of change: roof tiles replaced with bituminous tiles

date(s):1994

circumstances/reasons for change: maintenance/repair

effect of changes: change of roof structure and appearance

persons/organisations involved: Brothers of the Society of Mary

type of change: pews dismantled, roof and spouting damaged, tabernacle light and Christ figure removed, triangular window in northwest elevation blew out in storm (2003)

date(s): 2000-4

circumstances/reasons for change: use of building as builders' shed during site redevelopment

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effect of changes: loss of historic fabric  
persons/organisations involved: Futuna Close residential developers

- **Summary of important changes after restoration**

type of change: triangular window in northwest elevation repaired  
date(s): 2004  
circumstances/reasons for change: necessary repair  
effect of changes: restoration of feature window  
persons/organisations involved: Friends of Futuna

type of change: sacristies reroofed, new ceiling tiles, floor and door repairs, electrical services upgrade, gas heating and new toilet installed.  
date(s): 2009  
circumstances/reasons for change: maintenance and repair  
effect of changes: enhanced building services and integrity  
persons/organisations involved: Friends of Futuna

type of change: repair and maintenance, including waterproofing of foundations, repair and painting of exterior timber soffits and light modulators, painting of concrete blockwork, and new landscaping. Demountable access ramp installed and entry doors replaced.  
date: 2011-12  
circumstances/reasons for change: to help ensure longevity and improve building access  
effect of changes: conservation and enhancement  
persons/organisations involved: Friends of Futuna; Bevin + Slessor Architects; Wraight and Associates (landscape architects); Nikau Palmatum; WCC; Lion Foundation; LT McGuinness.

type of change: structural repairs to the four external fins.  
date: 2017  
circumstances/reasons for change: to help ensure longevity  
effect of changes: conservation and enhancement  
persons/organisations involved: Friends of Futuna; Dr. Peter Parkes (architect); Lion Foundation; WCC; LT McGuinness.

type of change: replacement of rotting timbers, fixing spalling concrete and asbestos removal. Replacement of failing roof tiles with new ceramic tiles, fabricated by water jet cutting them from Laminam sheets. Tiles replicate, but are significantly superior to, the original white fibre cement asbestos tiles used in 1961. New copper flashings. Acrylic windows restored and strengthened.  
date(s): 2025-26  
circumstances/reasons for change: to help ensure longevity  
effect of changes: conservation and enhancement  
persons/organisations involved: Futuna Chapel Trust

## 2. Description of building(s)

- **Site/building character**

*Summarize main character and give notes on surviving site/building(s)/part(s) of area.*

*If a site: principle features and zones of influence; main elements in spatial composition.*

*If a building, main features, construction and materials.*

Futuna Chapel is built up from a square footprint, which is quartered and is symmetrical on the diagonal of the square. The roofs above are alternating half-hips and half-gables, steeply pitched and falling from a lofty ridge to low eaves, under which the concrete walls are roughly textured with a pebble-dashed finish. A journey from Friend Street on the south side of the building takes the visitor around to the entry in the north-west quadrant, which is cut away. Here, two doors provide access into the interior. The primary axis is on the diagonal, leading directly to the altar, which is also positioned diagonally. In the remaining two quarters, banks of pews that are not unlike those Le Corbusier designed for Ronchamp face towards the altar. The interior has the informality enabled by Vatican II in 1962, after the Chapel's completion in 1961, with the altar in close proximity to the pews.

The interior is essential to the experience of the building. One central timber pou (post) has a series of angled struts supporting the exposed timber rafters. The openings in the gable ends have coloured acrylic in a grid formation. The coloured light that enters through the acrylic moves across the texture of the pebble-dashed walls, the pre-cast concrete and timber of the pews and the flagstone flooring. The quality of the light changes with the seasons, the weather and the time of day.

Architect John Scott expressed his admiration for three design precedents: (i) Māori buildings known as whare, which translates as house; (ii) farm buildings including the woolshed, where sheep were shorn of their winter wool; and (iii) the regional modernism of the Auckland practice, Group Architects.<sup>1</sup> The primary scholar of John Scott's work, Russell Walden, interpreted Futuna as whare-meets-woolshed, and as an expression of a bi-cultural New Zealand architecture.<sup>2</sup> He also noted reference to Le Corbusier's chapel at Ronchamp and, in its planning, Henri Matisse's Chapel of the Rosary at Vence.

The references to Māori architecture can be seen in the building's gabled roof and low eaves, its central heart pou and also the open green space on the north side of the building, which Walden compared to the marae ātea or ceremonial space of a Māori meeting house. While for Walden these elements made it a bi-cultural architecture, a more recent writer, Bill McKay, suggested it was more assimilationist than bi-cultural as the references to Māori architecture are subtle and abstract, whereas in some of Scott's other work, notably the Māori Battalion War Memorial Hall in Palmerston North (1954-64), they are more overt.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> John Scott in Ray Grover, "Interview with John Scott and Rossano (Ming Ching) Fan: Of Woolsheds, Houses and People," *Islands: A New Zealand Quarterly of Arts and Letters* 2, no. 3 (1973): 289-302.

<sup>2</sup> Walden, *Voices of Silence*.

<sup>3</sup> Bill McKay, "Halfcaste or Bicultural: John Scott, Māori and Architecture in the 1960s. In *Contested terrains: Proceedings of the 23<sup>rd</sup> Annual Conference of the Society of Architectural Historians, Australia and New Zealand*, ed. Terence McMinn, John Stephens and Steve Basson (Fremantle: SAHANZ, 2006), 363-69.

- **Current use**

of whole building/site: A deconsecrated chapel that can be visited and used for events such as weddings, lectures and recitals.

of principal components (if applicable): As above

comments: The current use is commensurate with the significance of the building.

- **Present condition**

of whole building/site: The Futuna Chapel Trust has done, and is doing, an excellent job of repairing and maintaining the building to ensure its longevity. The work is consistent with the recommendations put forward in a conservation plan prepared by conservation architect Chris Cochran (2006) and updated and expanded by conservation architect Russell Murray and architectural historian Elizabeth Cox in 2020.

of principal components (if applicable): As above. The crucifix figure remained missing for several years after the building was saved from demolition. It was located by police in 2012, examined and quarantined by Te Papa conservators, restored by art conservator Carolina Izzo in 2012 and returned to the building in 2013.

of other elements (if applicable): All elements, including the acrylic windows and Stations of the Cross, have been included in the repair programme.

of surrounding area (if applicable): The context was compromised by a medium-density residential development called 'Futuna Close' in the early 2000s.

comments: The building is maintained to a high standard by the Futuna Chapel Trust. The incremental restoration of the building has been informed by best practice conservation guidelines and undertaken as funding has allowed.

### **3. Evaluation of restoration/conservation**

*Give the scientific reasons for selection for do.comomo documentation.*

#### ***Intrinsic value***

- **Technical evaluation:**

The building was designed to be built largely by members of the Society of Mary and is thus of comparatively simple construction utilising concrete and timber. The coloured acrylic windows were new and experimental at the time of construction and these have been restored.

- **Social evaluation:**

The conservation of the building by the Futuna Chapel Trust upholds the community significance of the chapel, as does the ability of the public to visit the chapel and contribute to its ongoing maintenance and use.

- **Cultural and aesthetic evaluation:**

The exceptional architectural value of the chapel is widely recognised and underpins efforts to conserve and maintain the building since 2003.

#### 4. Documentation

- **Archives/written records/correspondence etc: (state location/ address)**

John Scott's drawing archive has been lodged with the Alexander Turnbull Library in Wellington (2021). This includes full architectural documentation of the Chapel, in thirteen pen-and-ink working drawings on tracing paper and three hand-written sheets of engineering calculations and early sketch design drawings.

- **Principal publications (in chronological order):**

*NZIAJ*, Oct 1964, 272-73.

*NZIA Journal*, December 1965, 391-94.

*NZIA Journal*, May 1968, 140.

*Home and Building*, August 1968, 37-39.

Ray Grover, "Interview with John Scott and Rossano (Ming Ching) Fan: Of Woolsheds, Houses and People," *Islands: A New Zealand Quarterly of Arts and Letters* 2, no. 3 (1973): 289-302.

*New Zealand Architect*, no. 3, 1986, 58-59.

Russell Walden, *Voices of Silence: New Zealand's Chapel of Futuna* (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 1987).

"New Zealand," in *The Modern Movement in Architecture: Selections from the DOCOMOMO Registers*, ed. Dennis Sharp and Catherine Cooke (Rotterdam: 010 Publishers, 2000), 185-92.

*Heritage New Zealand*, August 2000, 39.

*Heritage New Zealand*, Summer 2002, 26-27.

Bill McKay, "Architecture and Māori in the Sixties: Through the Window of Te Ao Hou. In *About as Austere as a Dior Gown: New Zealand Architecture in the 1960s*, ed. Christine McCarthy (Wellington: Victoria University of Wellington, 2005), 56-62.

Bill McKay, "Halfcaste or Bicultural: John Scott, Māori and Architecture in the 1960s. In *Contested terrains: Proceedings of the 23<sup>rd</sup> Annual Conference of the Society of Architectural Historians, Australia and New Zealand*, ed. Terence McMinn, John Stephens and Steve Basson (Fremantle: SAHANZ, 2006), 363-69.

Chris Cochran, "Futuna Chapel, Futuna Close, Karori: Conservation Plan for the Friends of Futuna Charitable Trust," Prepared for the Friends of Futuna Charitable Trust, Wellington, 2006.

*Cross Section*, August 2006, 4.

*Dominion Post*, 1 May 2007, A6-A7.

*Dominion Post*, 5 June 2007, A7.

Christine McCarthy, "Futuna Chapel," in *Long Live the Modern: New Zealand's New Architecture, 1904-1984*, ed. Julia Gatley (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2008), 112-13.

E. Terragni and H. Thomas, *20<sup>th</sup> Century World Architecture* (London & New York: Phaidon, 2012).

Nick Bevin and Gregory O'Brien (eds), *Futuna: Life of a Building* (Wellington: Victoria University Press and Futuna Charitable Trust, 2016).

Julia Gatley and Bill McKay, "Beyond Futuna: John Scott, Modern Architecture and Māori in Aotearoa New Zealand," in *The Handbook of Contemporary Indigenous Architecture*, ed. Elizabeth Grant, Kelly Greenop, Albert Refiti and Daniel Glenn (Singapore: Springer, 2018), 607-35. Online at [www.springer.com/gp/book/9789811069031](http://www.springer.com/gp/book/9789811069031).

Russell Murray and Elizabeth Cox, "Futuna Chapel, Futuna Close, Karori: Conservation Plan for the Friends of Futuna Charitable Trust," Prepared for the Friends of Futuna Charitable Trust, Wellington, 2020.

Futuna Chapel Trust, "The Chapel," [www.futunatrust.org.nz/the-chapel/](http://www.futunatrust.org.nz/the-chapel/) (accessed 27 January 2026).

Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga, "Futuna Chapel," <https://www.heritage.org.nz/list-details/7446/Futuna%20Chapel> (accessed 27 January 2026).

'Kevin McCloud fronts historic Futuna Chapel restoration' *ArchitectureNow* 6 November 2025 <https://architecturenow.co.nz/articles/kevin-mccloud-fronts-historic-futuna-chapel-restoration/> (accessed 29 January 2026).

- **Visual material (state location/ address)**

original visual records/drawings/photographs/others:

John Scott's archive has been lodged with the Alexander Turnbull Library in Wellington. A smaller collection of photocopies of his drawings is located in the Architecture Archive within the Special Collections of Libraries and Learning Services at the University of Auckland Waipapa Taumata Rau.

The building was photographed by Gavin Woodward in the mid-1980s for Russell Walden's book, *Voices of Silence*, and these photographs remain accessible through the JC Beaglehole Room in the Victoria University of Wellington library.

Post-restoration photographs and survey drawings:

Unavailable at this time.

film/video/other sources:

Futuna Chapel Trust "Futuna Chapel Sunlight Timelapse," [www.futunatrust.org.nz/the-chapel/](http://www.futunatrust.org.nz/the-chapel/) (accessed 27 January 2026).

The Friends of Futuna Charitable Trust holds additional videos of and in the building.

'Kevin McCloud shares his passion for Futuna Chapel'

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AbG0Nja5Ds4&t=6s> (accessed 29 January 2026).

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- **List documents included in supplementary dossier**

N/A

## **5. Fiche report**

rapporteur: Dr Ann McEwan  
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telephone: 64 21 296 7431  
e-mail: amcewan@slingshot.co.nz  
date of report: 29 January 2026

### **Examination by DOCOMOMO national/regional section**

approval by working party co-ordinator/registers correspondent (name): Julia Gatley  
sign and date: Julia Gatley, 20 February 2026

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### **examination by DOCOMOMO ISC/R**

type of ISC Registers/Urbanism/Landscape/Gardens:  
name of ISC member in charge of the evaluation:  
comment(s):  
ISC approval:  
Sign and date:

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Working party/ID n°:  
NAi ref n°.:

date:

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