

d o ■ c o _ m o ■ m o _

International working party for
documentation and conservation

New International Selection
Full Documentation Fiche 2003

of buildings, sites and neighbourhoods of the
modern movement

for office use only

composed by national/regional working party of: New Zealand

0. Picture of building/ group of buildings/ urban scheme/ landscape/ garden



depicted item: Futuna Chapel, 67 Friend Street, Karori, Wellington (1958-61).

source: Exterior photograph by Julia Gatley

date: 2007

source: Interior photograph by Paul McCredie

date: 2015

d o ■ c o _ m o ■ m o _

ISC/R members update 2003

for office use only

International working party for
documentation and conservation
of buildings, sites and neighbourhoods of the
modern movement

1. Identity of building/ group of buildings/ group of buildings/ landscape/ garden

1.1 Data for identification

current name: Futuna Chapel

former/original/variant name: N/A

number(s) and name(s) of street(s): 62 Friend Street, Karori, Wellington

town: Wellington

province/state: -

post code: 6012

Lot 6, Deposited Plan 326794

country: New Zealand

national topographical grid reference: -

current typology: Available for visits and for events such as recitals and presentations.

former/original/variant typology: A retreat chapel.

comments on typology: The building was saved from demolition as a result of purchase by a charitable trust formed in 2003, and since 2008 the Trust has opened it to the public on a monthly basis, hosted annual open days and made it available for events on a koha (donation) basis.

1.2 Status of protection

protected by: Wellington City Council.

grade: It is listed as a Category 1 historic place by the national heritage agency, Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga. It is also scheduled as a heritage item on the Wellington City Council's district plan.

date: HNZPT listing: 5 May 1999. Registration Number 7446.

date: WCC scheduling: operative 6 July 2006.

valid for: whole building

remarks: In New Zealand, HNZPT listing is a form of recognition only, not protection, and it is the local authority scheduling that affords protection through district plans rules.

1.3 Visually or functionally related building(s)/site(s)

name(s) of surrounding area/building(s): Futuna Close.

visual relations: The chapel is ringed by 66 residential units built in the early 2000s, known as Futuna Close. They are not of heritage value.

functional relations: The Futuna Residents Association recognises the significance of the chapel.¹

other relations: Futuna Chapel is the best of a series of seven new churches and chapels by the New Zealand architect John Scott (1924-1992), who is recognised as the first New Zealand architect of Māori heritage to earn a national profile, including a New Zealand Institute of Architects (NZIA) Gold Medal (posthumously in 1999) for his contribution to New Zealand architecture. John Scott's work also included schools, houses, two visitor centres and sundry other building types.

¹ Futuna Residents Association, <https://www.futuna.co.nz/> (accessed 1 August 2023).

2. History of building(s) etc.

2.1 Chronology

Note if the dates are exactly known (e) or approximately estimated = circa (c) or (±)

commission date: June 1958

design period(s): 1958-59

start of site work: July 1959

completion/inauguration: opened 19 March 1961 (Feast Day of Catholic saint St. Joseph)

2.2 Summary of development

commission brief: Futuna Chapel was built for the Priests and Lay Brothers of the Society of Mary as part of a national Marist retreat centre in Karori, Wellington. It commemorates the martyrdom of St Peter Chanel on the island of Futuna in the Pacific Ocean. The Chapel is dedicated to St. Joseph.

design brief: The brief was for a chapel that could seat 100 people comfortably, be focused on the altar, and allow people to sit alone and comfortably in silence.²

building/construction: The building has poured in situ concrete walls with a roughcast or pebble-dash render, a timber-framed roof structure, timber ceiling sarking and coloured acrylic windows in place of the usual glass. The floors of the aisles are in flagstone tradition, using serpentine (a form of greenstone highly prized by Maori and named pounamu) from an old mountain top quarry on the South Island's west coast, and the altar is a 2.5 ton slab of red granite from South Africa.³

completed situation: The retreat centre was located in a suburban area to the west of central Wellington.

original situation or character of site: The chapel was built on the site of an old tennis court owned by a wealthy Wellington family.⁴ The site was sold incrementally between 1942 and 1948, with the Order of the Society of Mary purchasing their part in 1947 and opening the Futuna Retreat House in 1948.⁵ They developed the retreat centre, into which the chapel was introduced, meaning it was initially flanked by the mid-century timber-framed buildings of the retreat that it served. The whole site was sold to developers in 2001. The single-storey retreat buildings were demolished and replaced with a cluster of 66 two-storey residential units known as Futuna Close. The chapel was used for storage during the construction of the housing development and was only saved from demolition by virtue of having been purchased by a

² Russell Walden, *Voices of Silence: New Zealand's Chapel of Futuna* (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 1987), 60.

³ Walden, *Voices of Silence*, 125.

⁴ Walden, *Voices of Silence*, 79.

⁵ Chris Cochran, "Life of a Building," and "Chronology," in Nick Bevin and Gregory O'Brien (eds), *Futuna: Life of a Building* (Wellington: Victoria University Press and Futuna Charitable Trust, 2016), 26, 144.

d o ■ c o _ m o ■ m o _

ISC/R members update 2003

for office use only

International working party for
documentation and conservation
of buildings, sites and neighbourhoods of the
modern movement

specially formed trust. Thus, the physical context of the building has changed, but the building itself retains its design integrity.

2.3 Relevant persons/organisations

original owner(s)/patron(s): The Order of the Society of Mary.

architect(s): John Scott (1924-1992)

landscape/garden designer(s): - Megan Wraight (2011)

other designer(s): Sculptor Jim Allen designed and made the stations of the cross , carved the crucifix Christ figure, designed the colour and pattern of the coloured acrylic windows and designed the light modulators above the entry doors.

consulting engineer(s): Architect John Scott completed the engineering calculations.

building contractor(s): Construction was led by foreman Brother Joseph (Xavier) Kelly, with assistance from carpenter Ray Thornton, and labour provided by the Brothers of the Society of Mary.⁶

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

name(s): Friends of Futuna Charitable Trust

association: The Trust saved the building from demolition by purchasing it and today runs it on a not-for-profit basis. Key players over time have included David Kernohan MNZM (founding Chair), Dr Simon McLellan (founding Trustee), Chris Findlayson (founding Secretary), Jacob Scott (son of John Scott and founding trustee), Paaki Maaka (architect and founding trustee), Nick Bevin (Chair since 2009), Amanda Yates, Bernard Russell, Bill Shortis, Roger Shand, Dr Peter Parkes, Jenny Hall, Bernadine Poole, Lianne Cox, Graeme Rule, Gregory O'Brien MNZM, Hana Scott (architect and John Scott's grand-daughter, Elizabeth Cox, Paddy Twigg, Liz Aston, Natalie Jones, and Patrons Shonagh Kenderdine (inaugural Patron), Chris Cochran MNZM (current Patron) and Nick Bevin.

event(s): -

period: 2003-present day.

2.5 Summary of important changes after completion

type of change: repair and maintenance, including the re-roofing of the sacristies; ceilings and doors; electrical upgrade; installation of gas heating, and the installation of a new accessible toilet facility.

date(s): 2003-09

⁶ Walden, *Voices of Silence*, 78.

d o ■ c o _ m o ■ m o _

ISC/R members update 2003

for office use only

International working party for
documentation and conservation
of buildings, sites and neighbourhoods of the
modern movement

circumstances/reasons for change: repair and maintenance, to make the building fit for purpose.

effects of changes: conservation and enhancement, to help ensure longevity.

persons/organisations involved: Friends of Futuna Charitable Trust, Bevin + Slessor Architects, WCC, LT McGuinness Construction company.

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.

date(s): 2012

circumstances/reasons for change: repair and maintenance, to help ensure longevity.

effects of changes: conservation and enhancement, to help ensure longevity.

persons/organisations involved: Friends of Futuna Charitable Trust, Bevin + Slessor Architects, Wraight and Associates (Landscape Architects), Nikau Palmatum, WCC, Lion Foundation, LT McGuinness Construction company.

type of change: structural repairs to the four external fins.

date(s): 2017

circumstances/reasons for change: repair and maintenance, to help ensure longevity.

effects of changes: conservation and enhancement, to help ensure longevity.

persons/organisations involved: Friends of Futuna Charitable Trust, Architect Dr. Peter Parkes, Lion Foundation, WCC, LT McGuinness Construction company.

3. Description of building(s) etc.

3.1 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

d o ■ c o _ m o ■ m o _

ISC/R members update 2003

for office use only

International working party for
documentation and conservation
of buildings, sites and neighbourhoods of the
modern movement

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.⁷ 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.⁸ 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.⁹

3.2 Current use

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

of principal components (*if applicable*): As above.

comments: The current use is appropriate to the significance of the place.

3.3 Present (physical) condition

of whole building/site: The Friends of Futuna Charitable 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.

⁷ 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.

⁸ Walden, *Voices of Silence*.

⁹ Bill McKay, "Halfcaste or Bicultural: John Scott, Maori and Architecture in the 1960s. In *Contested terrains: Proceedings of the 23rd 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.

d o _ n _ c o _ m o _ m o _

ISC/R members update 2003

for office use only

International working party for
documentation and conservation
of buildings, sites and neighbourhoods of the
modern movement

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 are included in the repair programme.

of surrounding area (*if applicable*): The context was compromised by development in the early 2000s.

comments: The building itself is exceptionally well looked after by the Friends of Futuna Charitable Trust.

3.4 Note(s) on context, indicating potential developments

Indicate, if known, potential developments relevant for the conservation/threats of the building/site

No development threats are known.

4. Evaluation

Give the scientific reasons for selection for DOCOMOMO documentation

Intrinsic value

4.1 technical evaluation:

The chapel was designed in such a way that it could be built by the untrained Brothers of the Society of Mary and its construction was therefore comparatively straightforward, and built to be robust. Concrete walls are textured with a pebble-dashed finish, complimented by flagstone flooring utilising serpentine off cuts and contrasted by exposed black-stained timber rafters and clear-finished sarking. The use of coloured acrylic for the windows was new and experimental at the time of construction.

4.2. social evaluation:

For almost 40 years, from 1961 to 2001 Futuna Chapel was of social and community value as the chapel serving a Catholic retreat centre. In 2001 when the Marist retreat centre was sold for clearance and re-development, concerned individuals campaigned to save the chapel from demolition, leading incrementally to the formation of the Friends of Futuna Charitable Trust, the trust's purchase of the chapel, and, over time, the building's repair and conservation. The Friends of Futuna Charitable Trust run an annual fund-raising weekend and organise an annual fund-raising lecture tour. The trust is not-for-profit and moneys earned help to support the operation and conservation of the building as well as projects associated with the Chapel and its architect John Scott including the books *Futuna – Life of a Building* (edited by Nick Bevin and Greg O'Brien; 2016) and *John Scott Works* (by David Straight; 2019).

4.3. cultural and aesthetic evaluation:

Futuna Chapel is considered to have exceptional architectural value. This results from its clever use of geometry, its highly textured material palette, and its mysterious quality of light, enhanced by the fact that

d o ■ c o _ m o ■ m o _

ISC/R members update 2003

for office use only

International working party for
documentation and conservation
of buildings, sites and neighbourhoods of the
modern movement

the luminosity is ever changing as outdoor lighting conditions change and the sun moves across the sky. The steep roofs and roof height seem to make reference to the Gothic tradition, particularly in combination with the mysterious luminosity.

John Scott, the building's architect, was the first architect of Māori heritage to reach the forefront of New Zealand's architectural profession. His ethnicity informs understandings of the building as "whare-meets woolshed."

The building's architectural value has been recognised multiple times. It was awarded an NZIA Gold Medal in 1968, and a 25 Year Award, also by the NZIA, in 1986. John Scott also received a NZIA Gold Medal (awarded posthumously) in 1999. It was perhaps the first New Zealand building to be the subject of a full monograph – Russell Walden's *Voices of Silence* of 1987. Walden taught architectural history in the Victoria University of Wellington School of Architecture and for many years brought his students to visit the building and required them to write essays on it. In 1999, DOCOMOMO NZ included the building on its "Top 20" list of New Zealand modern buildings. The chapel was listed as a Category 1 historic place that year and was subsequently scheduled as a heritage item on the Wellington City Council's district plan. In 2007 it was the subject of a second monograph, *Futuna: Life of a Building*, which focuses on its saving and repair. It is one of only eight New Zealand buildings included in the Phaidon atlas, *20th Century World Architecture* of 2012.

Comparative significance

4.4 canonical status (local, national, international)

Futuna Chapel is of national significance. It is architect John Scott's best-known and most-awarded building. It is a Category 1 historic place, was included on the DOCOMOMO NZ Top 20 in 1999, and is one of only eight New Zealand buildings included in the Phaidon atlas, *20th Century World Architecture*, of 2012.

4.5 historic and reference values:

Futuna Chapel is a well-known and much-admired New Zealand building that is said to represent New Zealandness in architecture through references to whare, woolsheds and the country's local building traditions. It is a significant work by the first New Zealand architect of Māori heritage to reach the forefront of the profession. It has received multiple awards, been widely published (including two monographs) and was saved from demolition by a charitable trust formed for the express purpose of saving it and caring for it in the future.

5. Documentation

5.1 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.

5.2 principal publications (in chronological order):

d o ■ c o _ m o ■ m o _

ISC/R members update 2003

for office use only

International working party for
documentation and conservation
of buildings, sites and neighbourhoods of the
modern movement

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 Maori 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, Maori and Architecture in the 1960s. In *Contested terrains: Proceedings of the 23rd 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, *20th 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.

d o ■ c o _ m o ■ m o _

ISC/R members update 2003

for office use only

International working party for
documentation and conservation
of buildings, sites and neighbourhoods of the
modern movement

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.

Friends of Futuna Charitable Trust, "The Chapel," www.futunatrust.org.nz/the-chapel/ (accessed 31 July 2023).

Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga, "Futuna Chapel," <https://www.heritage.org.nz/list-details/7446/Futuna%20Chapel> (accessed 31 July 2023).

5.3 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.

recent photographs and survey drawings:

It 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.

It was photographed by Paul McCredie in 2015 for Nick Bevin and Gregory O'Brien's book, *Futuna: Life of a Building*.

film/video/other sources:

Friends of Futuna Charitable Trust, "Futuna Chapel Sunlight Timelapse," www.futunatrust.org.nz/the-chapel/ (accessed 31 July 2023).

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

5.4 list documents included in supplementary dossier

6. Fiche report

name of reporter: Julia Gatley

address: School of Architecture and Planning, University of Auckland, Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142

telephone: +64-9 923 4656 e-mail: julia.gatley@auckland.ac.nz

date of report: August 2023

examination by DOCOMOMO national/regional section

approval by wp co-ordinator/registers correspondent (name): Gina Hochstein

sign and date: 13 October 2023

d o ■ c o _ m o ■ m o _

ISC/R members update 2003

for office use only

International working party for
documentation and conservation
of buildings, sites and neighbourhoods of the
modern movement

examination by DOCOMOMO ISC/R

name of ISC member in charge of the evaluation:

comment(s):

sign and date:

ISC/R approval:

date:

wp/ref. no.:

NAI ref. no.:

d o ■ c o _ m o ■ m o _

ISC/R members update 2003

for office use only

International working party for
documentation and conservation
of buildings, sites and neighbourhoods of the
modern movement