

# **Wanganui District Council Plaques and Memorials Policy**

## **April 2010**

The purpose of the Plaques and Memorials Policy is to provide certainty with regard to the marking of public sites of significance in the Wanganui District. This is to avoid ad hoc, prolific, inappropriate or widely varying placement of plaques and memorials. The policy operates within the context of the telling of the Wanganui Story.

The policy sets a process for the Council and the community to follow when new plaques and memorials are proposed by any party.

### **The Policy**

#### **Process**

1. Any person or organization may apply to install a plaque or memorial.
2. All applications will be assessed by a panel consisting of one Councillor, one Parks officer, one heritage officer, one Iwi representative and one community heritage representative. Advice may be sought from the New Zealand Historic Places Trust (NZHPT).
3. A specific form of application will not be required. A dialogue is expected between the panel and applicants.
4. The Council shall have the final say on all applications.

#### **Guidelines**

1. The policy will only apply to land and property over which the Council has control.
2. Advice may be sought for others as appropriate and agreed by the panel.
3. The panel shall take into account the context of the application and consult accordingly. See Guidelines following.
4. The panel shall consider the wording, material, size, position and appropriateness of each application.
5. Plaques or memorials will not be placed until at least five years after the event to which they relate.
6. Granite shall be the preferred plaque material, although other materials shall be allowed, eg small bronze NZHPT plaques for registered sites.
7. No application for a plaque or memorial in Area 2 Central-city waterfront shall be approved until the area has been researched and a design and interpretation plan has been prepared.
8. Major interpretation displays are a separate issue, but may be influenced by this policy.

#### **Review**

This policy will be reviewed 10 years after its adoption.

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### **Definition of areas**

#### **Areas**

The District is not uniform in the number of points of interest which the community may wish to highlight. Each of the following areas requires different considerations.

1. Central City – High potential, already has brass rubbings, pamphlets, very high visibility
2. Central-city waterfront – High potential, some existing plaques, very high visibility

3. Other urban riverbank areas – moderate potential, high visibility
4. Wider urban area – lower potential, low visibility
5. Industrial and commercial areas – lower potential, low visibility
6. Rural – lower potential, low visibility
7. Whanganui River Road – moderate potential, high visibility

### **Area 1 Central City**

This area contains the bulk of the District’s significant built heritage. A number of the buildings are marked with brass rubbing plaques and a few with NZHPT exterior panels eg Wanganui Rowing Club and Hatrick’s buildings on Taupo Quay. There are also a number of memorials. The interior “Discover Wanganui’s Heritage” displays are being developed in this area. There is the potential to ensure that all NZHPT registered buildings have bronze NZHPT plaques, which are recognized nationally.

### **Area 2 Central City Riverfront**

This is a highly significant area in terms of the Whanganui River, early Maori use of the river and the adjoining land, European settlement, and interactions between each of these. The recently developed walkway has increased the significance and visibility of this area. There is the possibility that there will be a proliferation of markers attempting to convey the many stories of the area. This area is especially relevant to Tangata Whenua.

### **Area 3 Other Urban Riverbank areas**

There are about 27 kms of urban riverbank from the North Mole to the Aramoho Holiday Park and Pauls Road to the Cobham Bridge. Points of interest occur both randomly and in clusters. Some of the points are large but are without any information eg the bridges. Others are invisible – former mooring or jetty sites, food sources.

The character of the riverbank area varies across a wide range: commercial, residential, recreational, transport and industrial.

A major project has been proposed to tell the Tutaeporoporo story using the Anzac Parade walkway between the Whanganui City Bridge and James McGregor Memorial Park. This and all riverbank areas are especially relevant to Tangata Whenua.

### **Area 4 Wider Urban Area**

There are a range of notable residential, educational and religious buildings within the wider urban area. There are also sites of former buildings or of notable events. As these have known addresses, a Trails approach may be best, and less intrusive where residents will be in daily contact with a visible marker. NB: NZHPT has some small plaques in town, eg Ballance home site by St Chad’s, Railway houses on Anzac Parade, Hatrick’s Slipway on Anzac Parade. These are all located in areas where pedestrians can stop and read them.

### **Area 5 Industrial and commercial areas**

As one of the earliest major urban centres in New Zealand, Wanganui saw many leading commercial and industrial developments and enterprises. Information on the economic and social significance of these parts of Wanganui’s heritage is not readily available to the public. A specific Heritage Trail pamphlet may be the most appropriate solution.

## **Area 6 Rural**

Much of the rural area is covered by Heritage Trail pamphlets and associated markers. There are some plaques. Because traffic is traveling faster and there is little pedestrian movement, plaques may be of limited use, except in locations where drivers can safely pull off the road to read them eg Henson Brick Kiln at Kukuta on SH4.

## **Area 7 Whanganui River Road**

This area is especially relevant to Tangata Whenua. The Whanganui River Road is developing as a significant tourism route. An earlier scheme to mark sites of interest was carried out by the Department of Conservation. This scheme attracted some local resentment. A high level of consultation would be needed with the appropriate bodies.

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## **The Background**

### **Wanganui Story Context**

The Wanganui Story is conveyed by a wide range of overlapping methods, as set out below.

### **Oral**

For the majority of the time that the district has been settled, its history has been kept orally, as well as in carvings and other devices which aided human memory. These methods remain important and will continue to be in the future, for both Maori and non-Maori. Some of this oral history is retained via place names, both formal and informal. Guided walks and tours of places, such as those of the Whanganui Summer Programme, are an important part of the oral telling of the Wanganui Story.

### **Print and Visual**

Documents such as newspapers, official and other records, diaries and letters retain a great deal of history, and it is research using these that books are often derived. The Alexander Library's New Zealand Collection and various archives contain much of this information. The last significant district overview was, 'The Wanganui Story', Smart and Bates 1972.

Since then a number of specialized books have been produced, focusing in particular parts of the district or on activities, egs street names, river boats, or individuals such as Jock McGregor or David Stark Durie. There have been a limited number of history Masters theses written on local topics. Aspects of the story have been reflected via fictional works, such as the film 'River Queen' 2005 and the novel 'Landings' 2008.

The Whanganui Regional Museum is a major store of documents, photographs and objects relating to district history, and their display and interpretation are important parts of the telling of the story.

### **Buildings, Objects and Street Names**

Much of the story is preserved in the landscape, in the form of buildings and other structures, monuments and objects, including headstones. Plaques, brass rubbings and other interpretive displays may replace or supplement these. The history of street names in the urban area is recorded in Streets of Wanganui, Kirk, 1978, 1989.

## **Trails**

The significance of many sites is communicated by way of a number of Heritage Trails, for which information booklets are provided as a guide to a series of site markers. Sites may include plaques and memorials. More self-guided map-based trail leaflets are being developed in conjunction with [www.wanganui.com](http://www.wanganui.com) eg the new Whanganui River Road leaflet and the forthcoming Central City Walks leaflet. There is the potential for others in this series especially as more people turn to the Internet for their information about historic places such as Wanganui.

## **Glass**

The Wanganui District Council Chambers stained glass windows Wanganui Story project is an overview and highlights method of displaying the district's history. Aspects of the story are also found in other stained glass windows, especially memorials in churches.

Further visual representations of aspects of Wanganui's history are in the Sarjeant Gallery collection, film collections and in other galleries. Many club rooms and organizational offices contain pictorial and other records of their own stories, which make up part of the wider story. Audio sources will also exist.

## **In-buildings displays**

A recent initiative – “Discover Wanganui's Heritage” - is the display of information within particular buildings, giving their history. These have the advantage of greater security and durability.

## **E-Heritage**

Some of the above material has been transferring on to a range of internet sites, both local and national. There is considerable potential for this method to expand. This links with the Trails section.

## **Existing Plaques**

The district already has plaques marking items of interest. These have been installed over many years, mainly by the Council and the NZHPT Whanganui Branch. The Whanganui Branch is in the process of recording and updating its signs. A project to record other plaques and memorials should be undertaken.

## **Summary**

In summary, the Wanganui Story has been told orally, in place names, in a range of written and visual forms, both original and interpretive. As time passes the story grows, not only as new events unfold but also as old events or artifacts are rediscovered or are given new significance. This will continue as long as people retain their curiosity for the past and the desire to understand the place and society in which they live.

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## **Policy Preparation**

This policy was developed with joint involvement of the Whanganui Branch of the Historic Places Trust, Whanganui Iwi, Wanganui District Council Councillors and officers, including Parks, Whanganui Regional Museum, Founders Society, Mainstreet, other interested parties and the general public.

## **Plaque Placement Policy Considerations**

Plaques have a role in telling local stories in that they are able to convey specific information about sites or events which is not apparent by direct observation. There are alternatives such as markers which relate to pamphlets or other sources. Plaques have the advantage that they are completely accessible to anyone happening upon them, without the need to be actively seeking information.

### **Urban Design**

As features of public space the placing of plaques raises urban design questions. The Council has adopted an Urban Design Action Plan, incorporating the national Urban Design Protocol. The Protocol identifies seven essential design qualities:

- Context: Seeing that buildings, places and spaces are part of the whole town or city
- Character: Reflecting and enhancing the distinctive character, heritage and identity of our urban environment
- Choice: Ensuring diversity and choice for people
- Connections: Enhancing how different networks link together for people
- Creativity: Encouraging innovative and imaginative solutions
- Custodianship: Ensuring design is environmentally sustainable, safe and healthy
- Collaboration: Communicating and sharing knowledge across sectors, professions and with communities.

Context, Character and Collaboration are the three themes with most relevance to the implementation of this policy.

### **Precedent**

Recent plaque installations include:

- York stockade site, Cooks Gardens
- Te Tauranga Waka, Taupo Quay
- Jock McGregor, Tregenna Street
- First European settlers plaque reinstatement, Settlers Wharf, Taupo Quay
- Watt – Taylor plaque, City Marina
- Street name plaques (Rotary North project)

Each of these has been as the result of a request from a community member or group.

### **Jurisdiction**

A Council policy can only control the placement of plaques on public land. However, in the central city there are many markers attached to buildings in what appears to be public space but which is actually private property. This policy will offer non-binding guidelines for such situations.

### **Themes**

In order to reflect the wider Wanganui Story, it is important that a range of themes is covered, rather than reflecting only a specific group or period eg early European settlers. This approach has been successfully used in the Wanganui Story set of stained glass windows in the Council Chambers.

### **Methods**

Plaques offer limited information, which for many situations is all that is required. There will be situations where a fuller display of information would be more appropriate. In such cases consideration should be given to the installation of full interpretive material.

**Security**

Existing plaques are in brass, bronze, aluminum and granite. All metal plaques are at risk due to their scrap value. All plaques are at risk of removal unless very securely attached to solid objects such as buildings, rocks or pavement.

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