

# Heritage

## Quarterly working together for our shared heritage

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### On the world stage

Rugby is an internationally-recognised part of New Zealand's heritage. This month and next 20 teams will take part in the Rugby World Cup, with stadiums in the Central Region from New Plymouth to Napier and down to Blenheim hosting games and teams.



While the bricks and mortar of many grounds being used have changed over the years, the sense of place – and occasion – hasn't. For each community it's a chance to add to the layers of history at McLean Park in Napier, at Stadium Taranaki in New Plymouth, at Trafalgar Park in Nelson. For cities such as Wellington, it will mark a significant shift from the inaugural Rugby World Cup in 1987 in which the former Athletic Park featured before closing in 1999, to the waterfront stadium.

For NZHTPT National Office Media Advisor Jamie Douglas, a former newspaper sports journalist and editor, sports venues are a valuable part of our heritage.

"I've been to a number of sports grounds that have changed in appearance over the years. But there is one constant at all of them, and that is the essence of the place, the sense of history that has been and is being created, remains.

"While the new stadiums are creating their own heritage values there's still something appealing about sitting in a historic grandstand, on wooden seats and recognising that you are part of a tradition that has gone on for many, many years. It may not have the visual kudos of other historic sites, but for many the physical association has special meaning."

*The Botanics in Nelson, where the first game of rugby was played in New Zealand.*

**The Rugby World Cup runs from 9 September to 23 October.**

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## The home of New Zealand rugby

The Central Region is home to many famous sports grounds, but none perhaps as significant as The Botanic in Nelson.

It was at this site, on 14 May 1870, that the first game under official rugby rules was played in New Zealand. The Nelson Rugby Football Club (New Zealand's first rugby club) defeated Nelson College before 200 spectators. The game was considerably different to today's rules, with 18 players on each side – 10 forwards, three halfbacks, three three-quarters, and two fullbacks - and the final score of 2-0. The local newspaper reported that the game was attended by "a fair sprinkling of ladies and a goodly number of the opposite sex".

The site is marked by a plaque and information panel commemorating the historical event (pictured).



Nelson was also home to the father of New Zealand rugby, Charles Monro who had returned from London in 1870 after being introduced to the game while at Christ's College. Wellington, Taranaki and Wanganui were also quick to establish the game and the region was prominent in rugby's growth. Indeed, Monro visited Wellington following the inaugural rugby

game and selected a local side that played the visiting Nelson side in Petone on 12 September – the first interprovincial game in New Zealand.

Trafalgar Park has been the home of Nelson rugby since 1888. It will host three Rugby World Cup matches involving Australia, Italy, Russia and the United States of America.

## Fields of dreams

Sports grounds that traditionally have meant the world to their communities will literally be home to many countries during the Rugby World Cup.

Five Central Region venues will host World Cup matches this month and next – Wellington's Westpac Stadium, New Plymouth's Stadium Taranaki, Napier's McLean Park, Palmerston North's Arena Manawatu and Nelson's Trafalgar Park.

The All Blacks will feature in Wellington during pool play against Canada. Other rugby heavyweights featuring in the Central Region include France (in Napier and Wellington), Argentina (in Palmerston North), South Africa (in Wellington) and Australia (in Nelson and Wellington).

Other venues will be part of the extravaganza, hosting teams ahead of, and during, the event. Cooks Gardens in Whanganui will be used by the United States rugby team, Memorial Park in Masterton by Georgia, and Lansdowne Park in Blenheim (pictured) by Russia.

In Wellington, Rugby League Park will be the training venue for South Africa, Australia and New Zealand, while Newtown Park will host France and USA. Tonga will use the Hutt Recreation Ground while Wales, Fiji



and Canada will spend time at Porirua Park.

"Many of these historic grounds have witnessed significant matches over the years," says NZHPT Central Region General Manager Ann Neill.

"The World Cup will add another rich layer of history to the heritage fabric associated with these sports grounds – and one that will be remembered for many years to come by the communities involved and country as a whole."

## Rugby on the Chathams

The national game has been played on the Chatham Islands for more than a century, with Moriori leader Tommy Solomon (1884-1933) being described as a powerful back in the Owenga rugby team.

A club competition featuring Owenga, Waitangi and Northern was played until the mid to late 1990s as increased work commitments meant less leisure time. Greg Horler from Awarakau Farmstays on the Chatham Islands says the only regular game played nowadays is the Kaingaroa Memorial Match to commemorate the drowning of 13 members of the Kaingaroa team in 1931.

“They were travelling by boat to Owenga but disappeared and were never seen again. There were several sets of brothers involved and it was a great blow

to the community. The only survivors of the team were the ones that rode by horseback to the match.”

Greg says the annual match is played with “mates against mates and sometimes brother against brother” which makes for an interesting time.

The Chatham Islanders often organise reciprocal visits with mainland teams. Highlights in the past few years have included playing the Bay of Plenty Classics as a curtain-raiser for a national provincial match in Tauranga and home and away matches against Nelson club

side Waimea. The side also turns its hand to rugby league, having hosted and visited the Kaiapoi Bulldogs Rugby League Presidents team.

“We have developed a field at the Norman Kirk Memorial Centre which is a great playing field – all we need is more teams to visit,” Greg says.

Chatham Islands rugby is affiliated to the Canterbury Rugby Union which sends out a representative to conduct coaching clinics. A five-team touch rugby competition played on the Chatham Islands featured on television programme Country Calendar recently.

## Heritage Month launched at The Basin

**Don Neely, MBE, MNZM, knows more about the Basin Reserve in Wellington than most.**

So he should, as one of New Zealand’s highly respected sports historians and a prolific writer on the history of the Basin Reserve and New Zealand cricket. Don was invited by the Wellington Region Heritage Promotion Council to be guest speaker at the launch of Heritage Month at the Basin on 1 September with the theme this year being ‘Sport and Recreation’. The New Zealand Historic Places Trust registered the Basin Reserve as a historic area in 1998 and agreed to sponsor this year’s launch.

As a New Zealand cricket historian, former President and chairman of national cricket selectors, life member of New Zealand Cricket, Basin Reserve trustee and a trustee of the New Zealand Cricket Museum, Don Neely has written



or co-written over 30 books on New Zealand cricket. The Basin Reserve is a place of pride and passion for Don as he recounts the great sporting achievements since its inception as a sports ground in 1866 and the many civic fanfares and national events that have been celebrated at this ground.

A smile is never far from Don’s face when he talks about the crowds that have flocked to The Basin. “This is a unique historic reserve that the citizens of Wellington and its many visitors can enjoy walking through by day. Nowhere else in the world is a sporting ground of this stature so readily accessible to its people”.

## Places to be seen

Two unique national sporting visitor attractions can be found just a couple of hours from each other – the Rugby Museum in Palmerston North and Cricket Museum at the Basin Reserve in Wellington.

The Rugby Museum has now re-opened at the regional museum Te Manawa in Palmerston North, having formerly been located next to FMG Stadium, the home of the Manawatu provincial side. It was the first national rugby museum established in the world and has more than 37,000 items in its collection.

Their website [www.rugbymuseum.co.nz](http://www.rugbymuseum.co.nz) says heritage items include a wide range of uniforms, photographs, programmes and other rare memorabilia relating

to New Zealand's national game. The museum – with more than 30 colourful displays recording the history of the game – is open daily.

The New Zealand Cricket Museum is located within the Old Grandstand at the Basin Reserve in Wellington – the spiritual home of New Zealand cricket. The grandstand was built in 1924-25 and is registered as a Category II historic place by the NZHPT. It is part of a wider Basin Reserve Historic Area registration (Record number 7441, [www.historic.org.nz](http://www.historic.org.nz)).

A variety of sporting and cultural events have been staged at the Basin Reserve since it first staged a cricket game on 11 January 1868; including rugby and the first floodlit game of football (soccer) in 1879. Today the ground is used by Wellington club rugby side Old Boys University as a home ground.



The Cricket Museum ([www.nzcmuseum.co.nz](http://www.nzcmuseum.co.nz)) opened in 1987 and has a range of exhibitions and a collection that includes equipment and clothing, ornamental objects, historical photographs, books and paper collections. More information can also be found on the New Zealand Cricket website [www.nzcricket.co.nz](http://www.nzcricket.co.nz)

## Good reason to grandstand

Sport represents a core part of our identity. Sports grounds and their associated buildings - from the grandest to most simple - are a visual reminder of who we are as New Zealanders.

The national passion for sport is reflected in the participation levels across a wide range of sporting activities and the number of venues we have that are community funded.

The Central Region is rich in sporting heritage, with a number of sites registered with the NZHPT. They vary from school pavilions to grandstands, rowing clubs, skating rinks, saltwater baths, jockey clubs and even a glacier hut.

The most recent addition to the Register was the Eketahuna Grandstand

(pictured) as a Category II historic place. Built in 1913, it is a fine representation of a grandstand erected by a small provincial town in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

"There are many examples of these structures, striking but elegant in their simplicity, dotted around the country," says Central Region Area Coordinator David Watt.

"Their value is reflected by the community looking after them to ensure they continue to be used for years to come."

Other interesting registrations with a sporting or recreational link include the Sound Shell and Skating Rink at Marine Parade in Napier and the Glacier Hut at Tongariro National Park. The Napier attraction was built in 1932 - one year on from the devastating earthquake - and continues to be used by young and old. The Category I-Glacier Hut was built in 1923 and reflected the growing popularity of skiing as a past-time.



The Wanganui Collegiate School Pavilion, Wanganui Rowing Club Building, former Feilding Jockey Club, Basin Reserve Pavilion, Star Boating Club Building, Wellington Rowing Club Building and Motueka Saltwater baths are some of the other registered historic sites.