



90TH ANNIVERSARY 1931 HAWKE'S BAY EARTHQUAKE

Wednesday, 3 February 2021

Service starts at 10.40am

Hastings City Centre by the clock tower

For more information and changes in event location due to adverse weather conditions, please call Hastings District Council on 871 5000.

90TH ANNIVERSARY
**1931 HAWKE'S BAY
EARTHQUAKE**

ORDER OF CEREMONY

Photo: Knowledge Bank

MC: Kevin Watkins, Hastings District Councillor

Members of City of Hastings Pipe Band will signal start of service from opposite ends of the city

10.30am Karakia & Mihi
Kaumātua Jerry Hapuku

10.47am One minute of silence marked by the ringing of the bell

National Anthem led by
Councillor Henare O'Keefe

Welcome Address
Mayor Sandra Hazlehurst

Period of Reflection and Prayer
Rt Rev Andrew Hedge, Bishop of Waiapu

Survivor Speech
Hamilton Logan

Roll of Remembrance
Councillor Henare O'Keefe

READINGS:

- Sam Connor, Head Boy
Hastings Boys High School
- Joe Bassett, School Ambassador
Hastings Intermediate School

Acknowledgements
Councillor Kevin Watkins

Laying of wreaths at Clock Tower

Blessing & Karakia
Kaumātua Jerry Hapuku

Haka
Te Aute College

TRACTION ENGINE:
Supplied by Wayne Clark

VINTAGE CARS:
Provided by members of Hawke's Bay
Vintage Car Club

90th Anniversary of the Hawke's Bay earthquake

Dignitaries, Earthquake Survivors, Ladies and Gentlemen, Boys and Girls

90 Years Ago today our region faced New Zealand's worst natural disaster - the 1931 Earthquake. The HB Earthquake took 256 lives - in Hastings we lost 93 people and thousands were injured.

Today we remember families who lost their loved ones and those who rebuilt our town.

As the Earthquake struck our town, many buildings collapsed with people buried in the rubble. The responder's first focus was to help the many injured.

Initially over 100 people were taken to Royston Hospital, which was based in Avenue Road West opposite Spotlight, but the hospital was soon overrun. Those unable to get into the Hospital were placed on the front lawn, from there they were taken by Lorries to a makeshift hospital at the racecourse.

For those who tragically lost their lives, a temporary morgue was set up as the YMCA building in Market Street about where the National Service Club is today.

The community worked tirelessly together to help with the rescue. Many people, such as mechanic Arthur Hood, would identify bodies of their loved ones – in his case his fiancée, 21 year old Gwen Butler. For the lives who were lost, local undertakers, Tongs, worked around the clock to ensure every victim was buried in their own casket.

Three days after the quake a train used closed stock wagons, took the injured in their beds from the racecourse's temporary hospital to other north island hospitals from Waipukurau to Wellington. The patient's names were written on Westerman's sales cards and attached to their bed frames.

Many of the nurses working in the makeshift hospital, were bandaged from their own injuries, they looked much like the injured they were carrying for.

In addition to the evacuated patients, around 2,000 people left the region to be billeted throughout the North Island.

But many stayed to help with the recovery efforts continuing to care for the victims and the injured, while others focused on the rebuilding of our town centre. This enormous task needed the efforts of many in the community. It was the time of the **Great Depression** which saw many unemployed men make their way to Hastings in search of work.

There were 600 unemployed men in Hastings before the earthquake, but they soon became part of the mammoth task of rebuilding our town and the lives of those left behind.

Our business district buildings, mostly constructed in Victorian red brick were not as severely fire damaged as Napier's, which allowed the Hastings Borough Council to begin planning the town's recovery within hours of the devastating quake.

Mayor George Roach, returned from a holiday at Lake Waikaremoana on 4 February, to face the rebuilding of his devastated town and restore its utilities.

A meeting, of mostly returned World War One colonels was convened by Colonel Holderness, a returned serviceman and Hastings solicitor. Together with Borough Town Clerk, Percy Purser, a meeting was held in Heretaunga 100 West Block – not far from here – where members were tasked with organising a Citizens Committee.

The committee was charged to clean up debris source food and medical supplies. Looting of businesses was a problem, so maintaining law and order became an immediate focus.

In addition, the Borough Engineer was authorised to employ 40 men as grave diggers, others restored the water supply, most of which was at least partially reinstated the next day. Electricity was restored gradually over the weeks following the earthquake.

In the days following the earthquake, the Navy came to assist with body recovery and setting up food supply depots. Food was commandeered from the local grocery stores for the food depot.

The Borough Council allowed over 200 temporary buildings for business to be constructed only of wood and corrugated iron the style of architecture

pronounced by the Hawkes Bay Tribune to be 'early Klondike' reminiscent of the Canadian gold rush towns created in the late 1800s.

The editor of the *Hawke's Bay Tribune*, William Whitlock, refused to work from a 'Klondike style' building. When the sailors, who were tasked to dynamite unsafe buildings, knocked on the door of William's Karamu Road building and upon hearing their plans to blow up his building, he reportedly told the sailors his building was safe, and they would have to blow him up as well. He then promptly went inside and locked the door.

Later, and against his will - the top floor of the two storied Tribune building was removed for safety reasons; furious he published an article saying it was "an architectural crime."

F L Bone erected one of the first temporary buildings on their property, which extended from Heretaunga Street to Eastbourne Street. They shifted stock salvaged from their wrecked Heretaunga Street store and transferred it to a temporary store in Eastbourne Street.

The 5 storey Grand Hotel on Heretaunga Street East didn't survive the quake. In order to maintain its liquor licence, the Grand hastily erected a temporary bar. But tragically, for weeks after the earthquake, bodies were recovered from the rubble that was once the hotel's bar.

Some business owners, such as Charles Griffiths, gathered his shoe stock from his wrecked store and operated from his garage at home. Charles was most amused when looters turned up to his home with a right shoe asking if he had the matching left shoe.

A sweet shop owner noted all of his lollies were looted except for a particular hard boiled sweet they had left behind. "Interesting they left those ones" he said to his wife, "Let's not order those again." The looters had carried out their own market research for him.

Work was made available to the large number of unemployed men by the Hastings Borough Council under Government work schemes to clear the earthquake rubble. With the earthquake rubble they built stonework bridges, walls and park seats which we still enjoy today across our city including Cornwall Park. The rubble was also used to build Te Mata Peak Road.

When the work schemes ended in June 1931, a contentious issue soon arose when some construction companies who were engaged to rebuild the town, brought labour in from outside Hawke's Bay.

Hastings's population swelled immediately after the earthquake and it is estimated that 400 to 600 'outsiders' were employed by construction companies and it appears over half became permanent residents.

Meanwhile, Hastings unemployed men swelled to 800 by August 1931 – the highest per head of population in New Zealand.

A meeting of 200 Hastings men pledged to boycott all firms employing outside labour.

Fletcher Construction was one company who brought many of its own men to Hawke's Bay.

Founder James Fletcher later apparently credited the earthquake as being the main reason his company survived the Great Depression.

Hastings architects had grouped together to design the town's new buildings, except for the banks and government buildings, who had their own architects. These new buildings were all built with reinforced steel.

Building regulations to strengthen buildings against 'earthquakes' were introduced giving local authorities the power to regulate and control building design. Not much has changed in 90 years.

By the second anniversary of the earthquake in 1933, 422 permits had been issued to rebuild or restore damaged buildings.

The new Hastings was described as having a bright and attractive appearance due to the use of cream and pastel colours that 'embellished the work of the builder'. The Evening Star newspaper said both Hastings and Napier "Are models for other towns to copy."

A carnival was held in late 1932 to celebrate most of the rebuilding and restoration of Hastings. Mayor George Roach's message at the carnival was "Less than two years ago we faced a terrible disaster and apparent ruin. But

hope is invincible, and was, may I say in all modesty, that we have done much by remembering what can be achieved through courage and cheerfulness.”

We must never forget the devastation and tragedy of the 1931 Earthquake which impacted on every Hastings’ family. Our survivors with us today have their own memories of what it was like for them and their families. It is important we capture those memories to share with future generations.

We will always remember and be grateful for the resilience and hard work of our forefathers who rebuilt our city which we know and love today.

We are the caretakers and custodians of our beautiful Art Deco and Spanish Mission Architectural buildings, which creates our city’s special uniqueness - the legacy our forefathers left us.

90 years on, I am sure they would be proud of our city’s recent and the future beautification and protection of our heritage.

Today we remember those people whose lives were taken, those who cared for the injured and those who rebuilt our city.

Nga Mihi Nui

Tena Koutou Tena Koutou Tena Tatoa Koutou

This Reading is an excerpt from Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand.

The earthquake's trail of destruction stretched over 300 miles from Wairoa to Dannevirke and north Wairarapa. North of Napier great stretches of coastline slipped into the sea and, throughout the whole provincial district, roads, railways, bridges, communications, and public services were either destroyed or disrupted. Hillsides disappeared, rivers were blocked or changed their courses, and huge cracks and fissures opened all over the countryside. The stricken population, up to 30,000 in the centres, were deprived of every elementary necessity of life—food, water, light, telephones, and transport. And to complete the devastation and add to the terror, the earth continued to quiver and shake for 10 days, some of the succeeding shocks equalling the intensity of the first disastrous upheaval. The story of courage, unselfishness, and self-sacrifice displayed in those days in the shattered areas is an inspiring one.

The 1931 earthquake prompted a number of changes in New Zealand's approach to earthquake hazard management. New construction regulations were developed so that structures would be built to minimise damage from earthquake shaking. Although construction regulations were not implemented until 1942, the government began to develop a system of earthquake insurance and compensation (which we know of today as the Earthquake Commission (EQC)), and civil defence strategies were enacted to ensure that public safety and relief would be taken care of in future earthquakes.

Hastings Remembers

In 1995 Hastings District Council installed copper plaques on the Hastings Clock Tower engraved with the names of those who lost their lives in the Hastings District - 93 people identified. It also includes a number who were unable to be identified.

It is inscribed with the words "Their sun went down before it was noon."

There is also a memorial common grave for the victims at the Hastings Cemetery.

The following Earthquake Survivor Stories have been taken from 'The Shock of 31' by Geoff Conly, and depict some of the experiences and emotions that people were going through on the tragic day.

Mr P.W Barlow, chief surveyor with the Napier branch of the Lands and Survey Department, had just completed drafts of letters to be typed when the room began to shake. He pushed his large swivel chair out from his desk, lay on the floor, put his legs under the desk and his head under the chair. He felt the culmination of the earthquake as a violent shake, 'similar to the shaking a fox terrier given when killing a rat' he said. Then came the big crash. Bricks were raining into the room and the dust was so thick he could not see his hand 25 centimetres away from his face.

Wilson Wright was 5 years old and never thought the sound of school bells would be replaced by the sound of an earthquake. At home, music from a gramophone echoed through his parents' house - his mother was busy with the household chores. 'The room shook, the chimney fell, and she ran outside as the second shock came,' said Mr Wright. His father, manager of the freezing works at Pakipaki, escaped injury but found himself in an unlucky position when the quake struck. 'He stepped out on to the veranda roof over the railway siding, just as it collapsed. He described it was like coming down in a lift, except he was chased by falling bricks. Afterwards he had the grim task of organising search parties to collect the dead bodies.'

Mavis Rowe was 16 when the earthquake struck and she was working at a Shamrock Street home. 'It was a hazy, muggy sort of day. Two of us must have been up the front of the house ... and there was just this awful noise. For a minute you'd think a truck had run into the house,' she said. 'It was so noisy with the house creaking and groaning and the chimneys coming down. You couldn't in your wildest dream imagine what those quakes were like. There was stuff falling all the time. I grabbed Auntie'. They found they couldn't get out of the back of the house, so they hurried back down the long hall toward the front door. But the quake had jammed the door shut. 'I was all prepared to get a shoe and break a window in the bedroom and push Auntie out. But another big jolt started and the door flew open. I pushed her down the hall and she never flew down those steps so fast in all her life!' Outside, a wooden fence was swaying down and touching a lemon tree before swaying back up again. 'I thought, the ground will open up and swallow us, but there's nothing we can do about it' she says. Across the road, a woman was calling 'my crystal, all my crystal'. Mavis said 'I thought: what does she want crystal for? It's the end of the world, she won't need that'.