

NEW ZEALAND MEMORIAL

Le Quesnoy | France

NOVEMBER 2021

NEWSLETTER OF THE NEW ZEALAND MEMORIAL MUSEUM TRUST - LE QUESNOY



Le Quesnoy in autumn. Image credit: Ville de Le Quesnoy.

Here in New Zealand, COVID-19 has unquestionably disrupted the second half of 2021. With summer imminent, we look forward to a more certain way forward.

In autumnal Le Quesnoy, the mayor recently welcomed two friends of the trust, as they met with local architects, viewed the manor building pre-renovation and caught up with local townsfolk who have been supportive of the trust's vision for many years now.

The project is now at an exciting new stage, with key next steps being progressed with the known available and forecast funds. Our newly formed project control group has been tasked to cost, plan, facilitate and monitor the development of the project, working to a planned stage one opening date of ANZAC Day 2023. The Rugby World Cup in France in September and October of that same year will hopefully see New Zealanders travelling again to support their team, and we want Le Quesnoy to be on their itinerary.

Thank you for your continued support, it is hugely valuable to us as we move forward. My very best wishes to you and yours, with the festive season upon us.



*Sir Don McKinnon - Chair
New Zealand Memorial Museum Trust*

REMEMBERING NEW ZEALANDERS AT PASSCHENDAELE

12 October 1917 is the day New Zealand lost the most people ever in a single day - 843 at Passchendaele. The annual Auckland service of The Passchendaele Society is usually well attended, but was unable to go ahead this year due to lockdown. Instead, their patron Sir Buck Shelford (pictured right) cut a lone figure as he placed a wreath at the Auckland War Memorial Museum Cenotaph.

Approximately 1.5 billion shells were fired in Flanders between 1914 and 1918, some containing gas, others packed with explosives. The preliminary barrage for Passchendaele alone, saw some 4 million shells fired.

Since 1918, the munitions of the Great War have killed a further 360 people and injured 535 more around Ypres. Approximately 300 million of the projectiles in Flanders were duds, with many still being recovered through farming, building and road construction, or as tree roots slowly push them to the surface.

Once discovered, police contact DOVO, the Belgian Army's Bomb Squad, which has a full-time unit operating around Ypres. Called more than 3,000 times every year, three teams of two specialist soldiers collect the unexploded munitions. In excess of 200 tons are gathered annually, requiring specialised treatment to dismantle them.



A PRE-RESTORATION VISIT OF THE MANOR HOUSE

**Friend of the Trust,
New Zealander
Peter Macky paid a
visit to Le Quesnoy
in October to cast
his eye over the
manor house before
restoration begins.**

Peter Macky knows a thing or two about restoring old European buildings, having spent a decade transforming a 150 year old railway station in Germany to its former glory. He teamed up with fellow Kiwi, Rosaria Campbell - the trust's administrator based in France, for a visit to Le Quesnoy.

The wish to honour the work of a great architect in history is something both Peter and Marie-Sophie Lesne, Mayor of Le Quesnoy, instantly had in common when they met. Le Quesnoy's huge surrounding walls are the work of Sebastian Vauban, a famous 17th century military engineer.

The building Peter restored just outside of Berlin, known as 'Kaiserbahnhof' (the Kaiser's railway station) was designed by August Orth, a famous 19th century German architect.

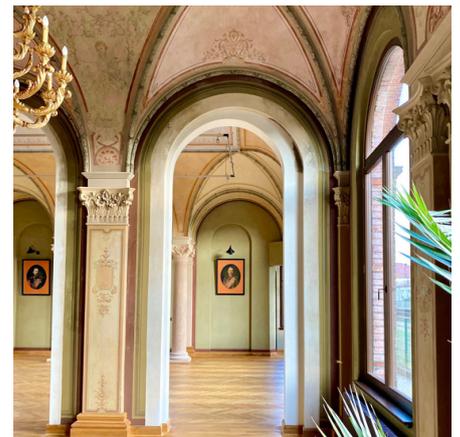
Built in 1865 in Halbe for the exclusive use of the Prussian Royal Family until Kaiser Wilhelm II's abdication in 1918, it re-opened as a public building 101 years later, after an extensive restoration led by Peter. Although used for a period as a public railway station, it was abandoned and left neglected in 1991, before Peter purchased it in 2010. He was mesmerised by the potential of the building when he stopped there on a bike ride in 2009, noting that "it held a fascination and magnetism for me, and although seriously neglected, it still looked impressive." Peter's passion saw the next decade of his life working with locals to restore the building to be a structure of stature in the community.

With his understanding of restorative practices and

interest in European communities and their local historical stories, Peter's review of the trust's building in Le Quesnoy was a positive one.



Top: Peter Macky with Mayor of Le Quesnoy, Marie-Sophie Lesne as she presents him a book about Vauban, the architect of the fortified walls. Above: Rosaria Campbell with Raymonde Dramez, former Mayor of Beaudignies, with her statue of Sergeant Henry Nicholas VC who died there in 1918.



Left to right: The restored Kaiserbahnhof in Halbe, Germany; the inside pre-renovation and later upon opening in 2019.

A PRE-RESTORATION VISIT OF THE MANOR HOUSE

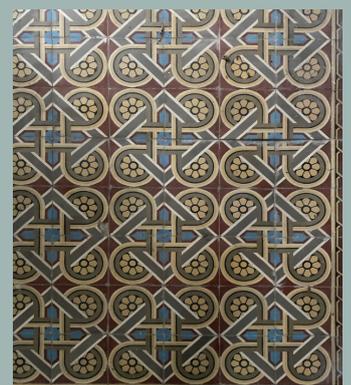
The property the trust has purchased in the centre of the town is a hectare in size, with two street entrances. The front entrance is on Rue Achille Carlier, named after the World War One mayor. The gracious manor house inside the gates, built in 1890, was his home during the German occupation. A valiant protector of his people in difficult circumstances, he was eventually arrested by the occupiers and deported to Lithuania for refusing to report ill and injured soldiers at the hospital, as prisoners. He did however make it back to the town to see the liberation by the New Zealanders on 4 Nov 1918.



The most recent use of the building was as the local Gendarmerie (Police Headquarters) meaning some of the original nature of the building internally has changed. An example is the lowering of ceilings for office space use, which will be returned to their former glory as part of the renovation. The manor's original floor tiles on the lower floors are intricate and beautiful.

Peter's impression upon looking at the building with the local architect charged with the renovation, was that "it is a very handsome building, even in its unloved state. When it's restored, it will be wonderful. It has the potential to be a 'little jewel' and it is the perfect base to showcase New Zealand within Le Quesnoy."

Peter's great uncle Lt. Col. Robert Allen, would be pleased to know his great nephew was back in the town he helped free over 100 years ago on 4 Nov 1918. As Commander of 1st Battalion of the NZ Rifle Brigade, Robert was awarded the DSO at Messines in June 1917 and a Bar for his courage and skill at Le Quesnoy.



Top: The manor house from the Rue de Achille Carlier entrance. Above left to right: Architect Veronique Coupet with Peter Macky inside the manor house; original ceilings and intricate floor tiles on the lower floors.

PROJECT UPDATE

The end of 2021 sees the project move into an exciting new phase.

The trust has recently set up a project control group (PCG) lead by Luke van Velthooven, and joined by Peter McKinnon and museological expert Tim Walker. This is in preparation for the next stage of the project - the implementation phase. Supported by Celia Caughey and Andrew Collow this experienced group will oversee the project's building and construction work as well as the concept and visitor experience. Shauna O'Malley has also recently been appointed as trust manager.

One of the first tasks of the PCG has been to start the process of sourcing an appropriate entity to be able to provide the visitor experience in Le Quesnoy. The trust expects to be in a position to confirm the successful candidate in the New Year.

The other primary task is sizing the renovation costs associated with the manor house and starting the process of stripping it back to the original state.

Also on site are the nine maisonettes which are being assessed for the most suitable accommodation purposes.



Above: rear view of the soon to be restored manor house on the one hectare site.

With the expectation that a long term site plan will be confirmed, a shorter term timeline has also been put in place. This is to ensure stage one of the visitor experience can open in time for ANZAC Day, 2023. With the Rugby World Cup played throughout France in September and October of the same year, tourists of all nationalities will be travelling around France (Kiwis included). We hope Le Quesnoy will be added to these travellers' itineraries.

The first half of next year will also see focus on a refreshed website, detailing our new confirmed direction and what the expectation is of this (yet to be named) living memorial.

We will undertake the scope of work in front of us in partnership with our French friends on the ground in Le Quesnoy. This enduring friendship has stood the test of time since it first blossomed on 4 November 1918.

Together, over 100 years later, we want to create an engaging facility in the heart of the town that local Quercitains will be just as proud of, as New Zealanders on the other side of the world. When stage one opens in 2023, the trust envisages a poignant and contemporary experience on site. Attracting all ages and nationalities, we hope visitors will be moved by the stories of our shared history with France.

THE NEW ZEALAND MEMORIAL MUSEUM TRUST - LE QUESNOY

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DONATIONS ARE TAX DEDUCTIBLE UNTIL 31 MARCH 2025.

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