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Obituary

John Daniels (1939-2018)

(Honorary Member NZAA)

The New Zealand heritage community mourns the passing of a great civil servant and leader, John Daniels, who passed away on 9 July in Wellington following a short battle with motor neurone disease, aged 79.

John was Director of the New Zealand Historic Places Trust (NZHPT, now Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga) from 1971 to 1988, a position he held with distinction during a very challenging period for heritage preservation in New Zealand. He went on to hold senior heritage management positions on historic resources policy with the Department of Conservation (DOC) from 1988 to 1998, including seeing the passing of the 1993 Historic Places Act.

During his tenure as Director, John saw considerable growth in the breadth of work of the NZHPT. He played a key role in seeing the cataloguing and classification of historic buildings and helped support a Maori Advisory Committee to the Trust in its successful efforts to restore historic meeting houses. He secured more funding from the Lottery Board to help the conservation of historic properties.

During the 1980s John led the NZHPT in many battles to save significant heritage buildings from demolition. During this period there were legislative moves to introduce heritage orders for the protection of national and regional landmark heritage places. He devised methods of providing heritage funding nationally to help local communities preserve and enhance the heritage character of towns and encouraged the formation of family trusts with the aim of preserving historic family homesteads throughout the country.

From 1994 to 1997 John represented DOC on the Board of NZHPT. He worked extensively in the voluntary sector after retirement, being a member (and later receiving honorary membership) of the New Zealand Archaeological Association. John was a member of the Onslow Historic Society and was its second president. He was an active member of the Friends of Old St Paul's (later being awarded a life membership) and served as chairman of the Joint Consultative Committee.

John joined the Friends of the Bolton Street Cemetery in 1980 and served as chairman from 1983 to 1989. He later continued on the committee as its

treasurer. He joined the Wellington Branch Committee of the NZHPT in 2011 and became its chairman with the challenging task of changing the committee to a fully independent non-governmental organisation following the passing of the Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Act in 2014. He stepped down from the chairmanship and became its treasurer for two years, whilst also serving on the executive of Historic Places Aotearoa until 2017. In this latter role he wrote policies and strategies for this new organisation. He was made an Honorary Life member of the NZHPT (Heritage New Zealand) in 2004.

John brought deep knowledge of the heritage sector to all aspects of his work and in his association with many people on heritage committees and societies. He always had a ready smile, a good sense of humour and took things calmly. He was one of the nicest men you could ever meet.

The New Zealand Archaeological Association extends its deepest sympathy to John's wife Jenny, to his sons Richard, Geoff and Robert and their families. Old St Paul's was full for John's service on 14 July.

David Watt, Heritage New Zealand (reproduced with permission).