

The Reserve Bank

The Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbour on 7 December 1941 marked the beginning of the Pacific War. In late December a map was published indicating where people could go in the event of an attack on Wellington City. One of the ten evacuation sites was William's Park at Days Bay.¹

Members of the Reserve Bank of New Zealand met with the Hall's Chairman and Secretary in early January 1942 to discuss the possibility of hiring the Hall. It was felt that the Bank's records and certain irreplaceable machinery would be safer in the Hutt Valley than in Wellington. The Hall committee, at a Special meeting held on 12 January 1942, agreed and a letter was sent to the Secretary of the Reserve Bank, Wellington the following day.

Dear Sir,

On behalf of the Taita Hall Committee, I beg to confirm the tentative arrangements agreed upon at a conference with representatives of the Reserve Bank, and the Chairman of the Taita Hall Committee.

[1] The Committee agrees to rent to the Reserve Bank for six months from 17 January 1942, the Taita Hall for the sum of £7 10s per week, payable in advance in six equal monthly payments of £32 10s.

[2] The Bank may, at the expiration of the above period, renew the lease for such period and terms as may be mutually agreed upon.

[3] Except in so far as it may be necessary to restore the building to its present use as a Social Hall, all additions and alterations shall become the property of the Committee, and the Bank agrees to pay the cost of any restoration.

[4] The Bank shall accept responsibility for damage incurred through its occupation and will pay all insurance as from 17 January 1942, and keep the Committee covered from loss by fire.

[5] The Bank shall safely store and return in its present condition all furniture and effects.

The Committee has appointed Mr F. S. Hewer as its representative who is authorized to make the necessary arrangements.

At the time the Hall was paying £1 8s per quarter in interest on the remaining £100 to be repaid on the Court Epuni Loan. The Revenue from the Reserve Bank enabled the Hall to pay off the loan on 23 March 1942.

In June 1942 the committee agreed to lease the Hall for another twelve months from 16 July with the same terms and conditions. After review at the Annual General Meeting in June 1943 the lease was renewed for a further twelve months. As the Reserve Bank did not require the hall for a further term an agreement was made setting out the terms and conditions for the reinstatement of the hall for the use of the residents.

Frank Sage² and Frederick Kitchener were asked to prepare tentative plans. In July 1944 the Reserve Bank advised that they were unable to obtain timber to replace the stage. At the August committee meeting a subcommittee consisting of Kitchener, Sage, Donald McArthur³ and the Chairman was appointed to effect alterations to the building and repairs to furniture. Arrangements were also to be made with Mr Mitchell⁴ to carry out the necessary electrical work.

¹ Emergency Precaution Scheme, evacuation camps, site plans - Wellington City Council Archives 00237-5721

² Frank Edward Sage (1899-1976) – Carpenter residing in Mabey Road; father-in-law of Francis James Searle

³ Donald McArthur (1876-1972) – appointed to the Hall committee July 1944 – Carpenter residing in Mabey Road

⁴ C. H. Mitchell, First Chairman of the Hutt Branch of the New Zealand Institute of Electricians March 1945 – Clarence Hamilton Mitchell (1900-1953) residing in Singers Road, Petone - fitter

In December 1944 the Chairman reported that building alterations were well advanced and explained that the electrical work would be carried out early in the New Year. New windows were also installed. Arrangements had also been made for the Reserve Bank to replace the gas copper and several chairs and to sand the floor. The promised chairs were to be delivered late October or early November.

The accounts for the renewal of the gas copper and the stage were forwarded to the Reserve Bank in February 1945 and they were followed in April by an amended statement detailing materials used in replacing the stage, gas copper and chairs. An invitation to a re-opening of the Hall was also sent to William Airey⁵, Secretary of the Reserve Bank of New Zealand. Attempts at contacting Airey in June were unsuccessful.

In March 1947 the Secretary was instructed to ask the Reserve Bank for a price at which the electric pumping system could be purchased. Mr Airey responded by requesting that an offer be made. The Hall offered £30, and the Reserve Bank countered with £40. This was accepted.

As of 2016 the concrete slabs, on which the bank's safe rested, were still visible.

⁵ Wilfred Farrant Airey (1907-1980) residing at 130 Karori Road, Wellington - Bank Officer