



Photo: Courtesy Len Hoogerbrug

This is the second of our Hawkes Bay itineraries, coinciding with the Hawkes Bay Museum and Art Gallery's showing of the *Long Live the Modern* exhibition, which runs until 22 November. Hoogerbrug fans shouldn't miss Peter Wood's lecture on Len's work at 6pm, 17 September at the HBMAG, Napier.

Len Hoogerbrug in Hawkes Bay

Among high profile international architects, the most common model of practice is the maestro. A clever young architect will work in the office of an older maestro, before going out on their own to either continue or react to their mentor's work. The reality is usually more complex, but they tend to be understood as the generators of a unique personal vision. They may attract an able team, but they're the masters of their domain. Here in New Zealand, particularly amongst Len Hoogerbrug's post-war generation, the maestro is a rarer beast. Something in our culture – tall poppy-ism or perhaps a lingering pioneer's distrust of authority – inclines us to prefer group effort over individual star-making. The careers of most Kiwi architects are defined as a sequence of partnerships – the professional equivalent of serial monogamy. Len Hoogerbrug's career is a particularly vivid example, having moved through working relationships with some of our profession's most colourful characters – Maurice Smith, John Scott, and Paris Magdalinos. A touch of maestro-ness is apparent, however, in that these relationships were more collegial than collaborative; even though they practiced in pairs, they tended to produce projects more-or-less independently, that is, working as individuals sharing staff.

Hoogerbrug's arrival in Hawkes Bay in the post-war years was part of the migration of architects to New Zealand from a range of different countries. Our Dutch émigré architects have less of a profile than some of the other groups, such as the Austrians (Plischke, Newman) and Czechs (Kulka, Cacala). Holland of course had its own very interesting history of 20th century architecture, including the De Stijl experiments, the modernism of J. J. P. Oud and W. M. Dudok, and the late modernism of Aldo van Eyck and Herman Hertzberger. Hoogerbrug had trained in Europe before emigrating, and continued to admire the 1950s and 1960s work of van Eyck and Hertzberger, visiting van Eyck's famous Municipal Orphanage in Amsterdam in 1963 (the year van Eyck visited New Zealand) and, on later trips, several of Hertzberger's buildings including the Centraal Beheer Office Building in Apeldoorn. It was Hertzberger who wrote about 'space-structuring construction' in this period, i.e. the stacking and repetition of simple spatial cells like match boxes. Such ideas had a direct influence on Hoogerbrug, particularly in the projects where he used hexagons and more complex geometries rather than simple boxes, producing plans organised on principles such as the honeycomb.

Hoogerbrug's career demonstrates the way in which modern architecture changed and developed in the second half of the 20th century. While many of his generation were less willing to experiment with changing ideas and preferred to stick to earlier principles and modes, his work followed the new developments. In an evolution that also correlates with his choice of partners, he moved from crisply modern housing that paralleled the work of the Canterbury School, to the regionalist where-woolshed mode that defined his time with John Scott, to more sculptural (almost picturesque) massing in the 1970s before his restrained experiments with Post-Modernism during his time with Magdalinos.

Having also trained as an engineer, Hoogerbrug did his own structural calculations until the mid-to-late 1960s. As a result, the structures became very deliberate design elements in his buildings. He recalls that the emphasis in those days was on designing to withstand lateral loads and that as the discipline became more complex, he did not keep up to date with developments.

His provincial Hawkes Bay location has perhaps impacted upon his national profile. However this location further from the frantic centres means most of his buildings have survived in largely original condition; Len has left behind some excellent buildings still very much worth a look today. *Andrew Barrie & Julia Gatley*

Biography:

Leendert Jacob Johannes Hoogerbrug was born on 25 June 1929 in Hilversum, Holland, which for many of his childhood years was occupied by the Nazis. He studied architectural engineering in Utrecht, and emigrated to NZ in 1951, working in Dunedin as a draftsman for Mandeno, Frazer & Galbraith, and later J.D. Allingham. He took Auckland School of Architecture papers extramurally, before moving to Auckland to study full-time, during which time he also worked for Charles Irwin Crookes Architects. After graduating in 1956, he moved to the Hawkes Bay and worked briefly for Malcolm & Sweet Architects. He was registered in 1957 before establishing his own practice in Hastings. He made an extended tour of Australia, Asia and Europe in the early 1960s, and soon afterward entered a partnership with John Scott that lasted until 1972. Hoogerbrug and Paris Magdalinos formed a partnership in 1975. Engineer Bruce Williams later joined the firm, which became Hoogerbrug Magdalinos & Williams. Hoogerbrug was NZIA Branch chair in the 1990s before his retirement.

1

1957

Van Bohemen House
41 Palmerston Road
Havelock North



Photo: Courtesy Len Hoogerbrug

This compact house, Hoogerbrug's first in private practice, was the childhood home of Auckland architect Christina van Bohemen. Her parents, the original clients, still live in the house. Dramatically poised high on a slope, this all-concrete-block house (Hawkes Bay's first) looks out across the plains to Mount Ruapehu on the horizon. Within, the heart of the house is a split-level space – including dining, living, entry and a balcony – that steps down the hill under a single sloping roof plane. Carefully placed windows and built-in wooden furniture with colour highlights animate the crisply composed spaces. See *Home & Building* March 1964.

2

1958

Offices of Firth Concrete
925 Karamu Street North
Hastings



This building was designed by Maurice K. Smith, and executed (with some modifications) by Hoogerbrug. It housed administration offices and reception for Firth Concrete, as well as displaying new possibilities for the use of concrete and concrete block. Roof planes fly over open and closed spaces to create a highly sculptural composition. Peter Woo has pointed out that the spatial atmosphere as well as the flying timber structure, timber sarking and glazed gable ends anticipate aspects of Futuna Chapel, the design of which Hawkes Bay local John Scott began when the Firth Offices were being completed. See *Arch. Review* Oct. 1959, J. M. Richards (ed.), *New Buildings in the Commonwealth, Home & Building* March 1964, and *Architecture NZ* Nov./Dec. 2005.

3

1959

Te Mata Shops
3 Napier Road
Havelock North



This six-bay commercial building is one of the jobs for which Hoogerbrug designed the structure himself. The flying steel framing is in the same plane as the lower level façade, while the upper level is recessed back behind it. Each bay originally comprised the same door and window arrangement, and perhaps surprisingly four of these remain largely intact, although some of the tenancies now require two bays, unlike the old days when one bay sufficed for such outlets as lockyers, milliners, Chez Fleur Florist and the Havelock North Cooperative Meat Co, purveyors of quality meat. See *Home & Building* March 1964.

4

1964

St James' Church
1024 Duke Street
Hastings



This Anglican church is a vertiginous composition, formed largely by the intersection of a very high east wall and a single sloping roof plane. This drama results from the cunning three-dimensional manipulation of a fairly conventional section over a fairly conventional rectangular plan. The interior is equally stunning, with light from the eastern clerestory filtering down through exposed diagonal braces. The building attracted huge interest when it was completed – it was even on the tellie – and received an NZIA Merit Award in 1964, pipped at the post for the Gold Medal by Warren & Mahoney's Harewood Crematorium. See *Home & Building* March 1964, *NZIA Journal* May 1964, and *Arch. NZ* Nov./Dec. 2005.

5

1965

Ahuriri Tavern
10 West Quay, Ahuriri
Napier



Built for Leopard Brewery Ltd, this tavern was built to serve the thirsty fishermen of the nearby port, and was the first licensed premises in Hawkes Bay without attached hotel accommodation. Making a series of nautical references (Hoogerbrug was a keen yachting), the twelve-sided project is an odd hybrid – a high(ish)-tech exterior with pre-cast concrete columns, steel braces and a roof suspended from cables are wrapped around a surprisingly woody interior. The building once stood isolated in its surroundings, but has been significantly altered; the symmetrical geometry and 360-degree views have been compromised by a large addition on the waterfront side. This project received an NZIA Merit Award in 1969. See *Home & Building* Jan. 1969 and July 1969, *NZIA Journal* May 1969, and *Building Progress* Dec./Jan. 1967/68.

6

1966

Peterfield Properties Offices
7 Northumberland Ave
Waipukurau



Located just off the main road of this sleepy rural town, this accountants' office is astonishingly defensive – rural bean counters' work place meets gang headquarters. It presents a high wall to the street, with plastered concrete panels sprayed with a white cement and marble chip coating and narrow slit windows. Walls to the other boundaries are entirely blank. Visitors pass through a covered entryway into a planted courtyard, which provides both access and light to the various tenancies within. If you're passing through Waipukurau, pause in nearby Waipawa to see Gordon Wilson's NZIA Award-winning Post Office (1961), although its once colourful brick façade is now painted an unfortunate uniform brown.

7

1967

Crippled Children's Society HQ
52 Raffles Street
Napier



Built as a facility for special needs kids, this single level complex has for many years been a regular child care centre. Precast concrete elements of three types – hexagonal columns, triangular roof panels and an edge beam – follow a modular plan comprising a series of adjoining hexagons of varying dimensions. The system is completed by concrete block walls, sliding doors and large areas of glazing. The facility's intimate scale opens up in the main activity rooms, where hexagonal pyramidal roofs constructed in timber sit above a strip of clerestory glazing to dynamically introduce light and extra height into the social areas. A real gem.

8

1970

Leopard Inn
173 Marine Parade
Napier



Built to replace the Albion, one of Napier's oldest hotels, this building was designed to make the most of the sea views across Marine Parade. This closeness to the sea dictated the use of hardy materials, but didn't preclude the use of typically wild 1970s colours and textures – the original blue mosaic tiles remain, but the original orange columns and gold-coloured upturned eaves are now a decorous white. Built on three levels, the building accommodated bars and restaurants, the most exciting being those located in the dynamic double-height spaces on the top floor. Originally occupying only half the block, the building was later significantly extended (by others) to accommodate the facilities of the Cosmopolitan Club.

9

1977

Tamatea Tavern
1 Durham Lane, Tamatea
Napier



Another of the projects for Leopard Breweries, this tavern, conference centre and motel was built to serve a rapidly developing suburb. The booze barn comprises the intersecting sculptural volumes of concrete block that characterize Hoogerbrug's work of this period – walls took over from roofs as the dominant elements. Within, the spaces are notable for dramatic changes in ceiling height, exposed structure and light introduced in surprising ways. In the larger spaces, dynamic wooden trusses and structural props fill the double-height volumes. Much of the original interior – such as the Formica detailing and glass etched with Leopard logos – remains extant. For retro enthusiasts.

10

1979

St Andrew's Church
302 Market Street South
Hastings



This Presbyterian church develops the sculptural arrangement of concrete block volumes employed at the Tamatea Tavern. The church proper has an almost square plan, dominated by a major diagonal axis that leads from the entry to the altar, with the roof's ridge immediately above. This planning strategy might appear to follow John Scott's Our Lady of Lourdes Church in Havelock North, although Hoogerbrug recalls that as a boy he used to go to a church that employed a similar arrangement. Stained glass windows are a later addition, acknowledging the New Zealand and Pacific connections of today's congregation. The building received an NZIA Branch Award in 1980.

11

1980

Havelock North Public Library
30 Te Mata Road
Havelock North



In this building a fairly conventional construction has been energized by an abstract mode of composition – the relatively simple hipped roof, which often comes low the ground, crisply intersects block walls rising from a more free-form floor plan. Hoogerbrug recalls that this roof design was influenced by the thatched roofed houses of Dutch architect Wouter Hamdorff. The C-shaped plan forms a sheltered entry courtyard from which much of the interior is visible; within, the functions were laid out in a largely open plan arrangement. The building was produced when Hoogerbrug and Paris Magdalinos were in partnership; an extension and Community Centre was added by Magdalinos' solo practice in 1998.

12

1983

Hawkes Bay Power Board
106 Warren Street North
Hastings



In this project the abstract volumes of Tamatea Tavern and St Andrew's are taken to an extreme in terms of scale and abstraction. The main building of the complex, which includes administration, control room and workshop facilities, comprises red brick veneer perimeter walls, and inclined planes originally clad with mirror glass. The project was fast-tracked, and built in three stages. We understand that the inclined glass walls were re-clad a comparatively short time after completion because of complaints about reflections to neighbouring buildings.

13

1986

Seventh Day Adventist Church
1209 Ada Street, Parkvale
Hastings



We like to think that while our generation has done much to rediscover, document and recognise the significance of New Zealand's modern architecture, the next generation will do the same for po-mo. If this happens, and if this church survives another few years intact, it will be a prime candidate for attention, right down to its pink and grey windows and fit-out. That said, the church again uses the near square plan with diagonal axis from entry to altar, with ridge above, as seen at Scott's Our Lady of Lourdes and Hoogerbrug's St Andrew's. The Seventh Day Adventist Church received an NZIA Branch Award in 1989. See *Home & Building* Feb./Mar. 1990.

14

1991

Flaxmere Policing Centre
Swansea Road
Flaxmere



Flaxmere was intended as a model satellite suburb catering to Hastings housing demand, but now has a reputation for being one of the most poverty-stricken and crime-prone suburbs in the country. Located on the fringe of the town centre, this policing centre was described by the architect as a "wolf in sheep's clothing". The low walls and pitched roof give the building a domestic scale, while the checkerboard strip of tiles makes its function legible – complete in blue and white. While here, step across the road to explore John Scott's little known Flaxmere Town Centre.

Other addresses:

Havelock Ski Club (1967) Loop Road, Top O' The Bruce Whakapapa Ski Field Mt. Ruapehu

This is not a Hawkes Bay building, but is included here because it is one of Hoogerbrug's favourites. A widely splayed A-frame has a curved apex following the staggered heights of bunks and to allow the building to shed snow.

Holden House (early 1980s) 46 McLean Road Havelock North

This house is visible from Te Mata Road on the hillside above Athfield Architects' Buck House (1980).

Napier Boys' High School Dormitory (1990) Chambers Street Napier

This building provides dormitory rooms for the boys that board at the school. To break down the institutional scale, the rooms are arranged on double-loaded corridors around a courtyard, with lounges located at each corner.

Kerry Stone General Motors (1991) 605 Karamu Road North Hastings

Now Karamu Holden, this car yard is located just a few blocks from Firth Concrete.

Sources:

Except where noted, all photographs are by Julia Gately or Andrew Barrie. Many thanks to Len for his generous help in preparing this itinerary.

Much of Hoogerbrug's work was published in the journals of the day, and in March 1964 *Home & Building* published a whole section on his projects (the issue was published to mark the NZIA Conference in Napier). The best single source on Hoogerbrug's work is "Architecture of L.J.J. Hoogerbrug", a University of Auckland BArch thesis written in 1991 by son John. It includes biographical information and a page or two on a large number of individual projects, including many houses. Paul Gilby produced a BArch report on the Crippled Children's Society building in Raffles Street in 1968. Peter Wood has written about the Firth Concrete Offices and St James' Church in *Architecture NZ*, Nov./Dec. 2005, and in *Long Live the Modern* (Auckland: AUP, 2008). He continues this work with his forthcoming lecture at the HBMA.

