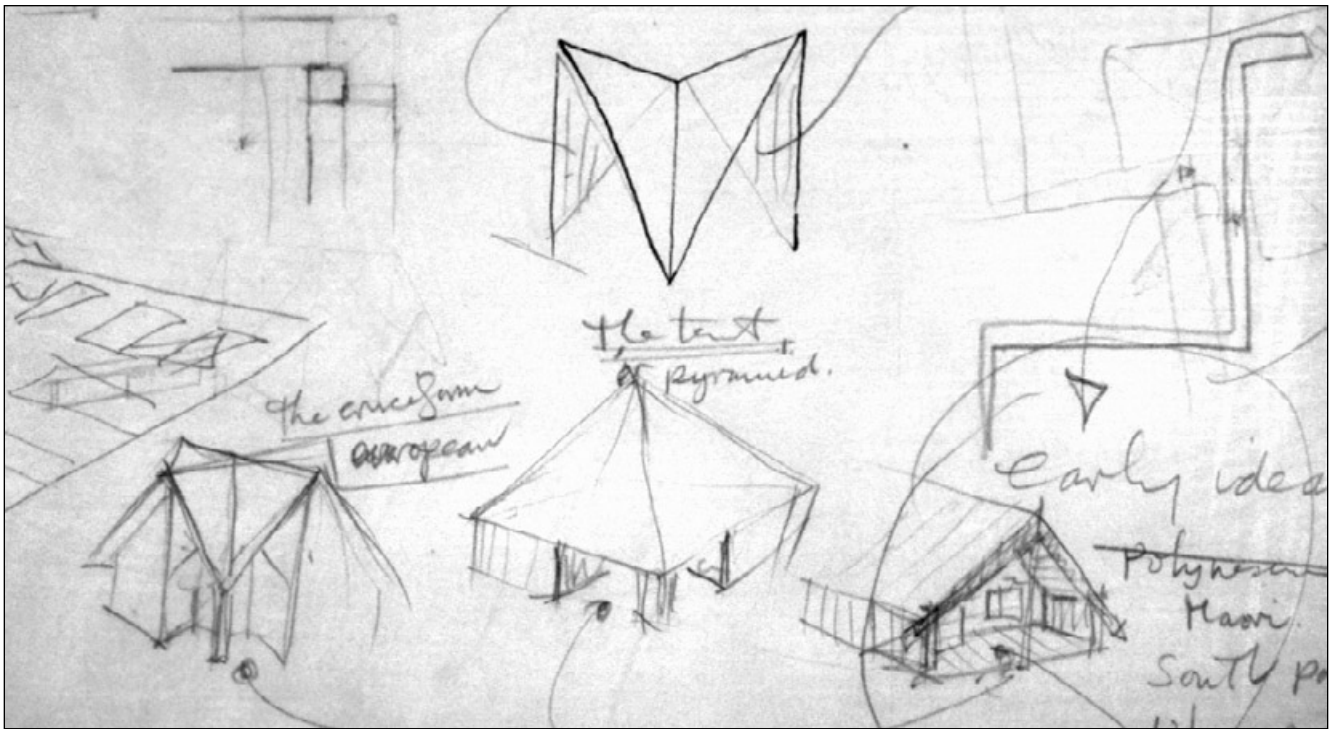
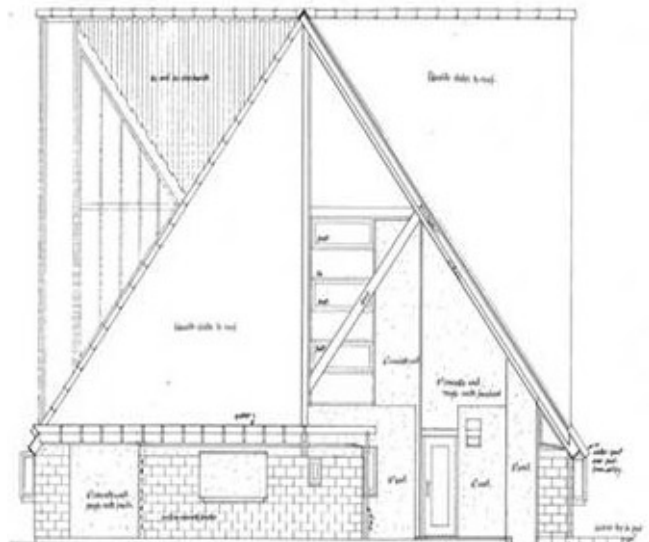
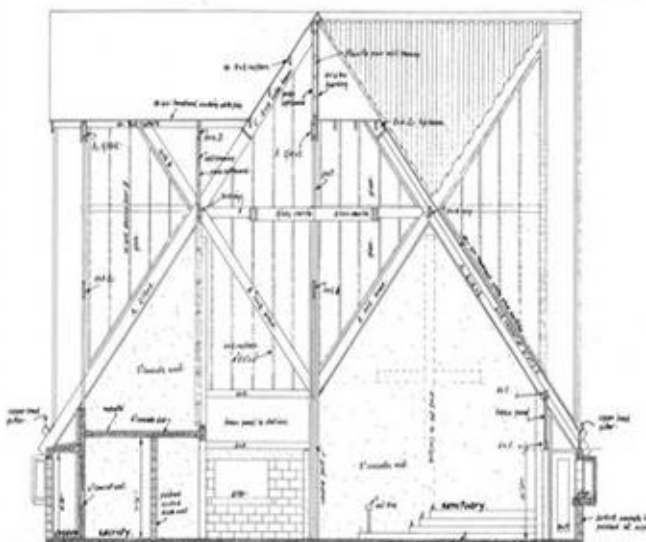


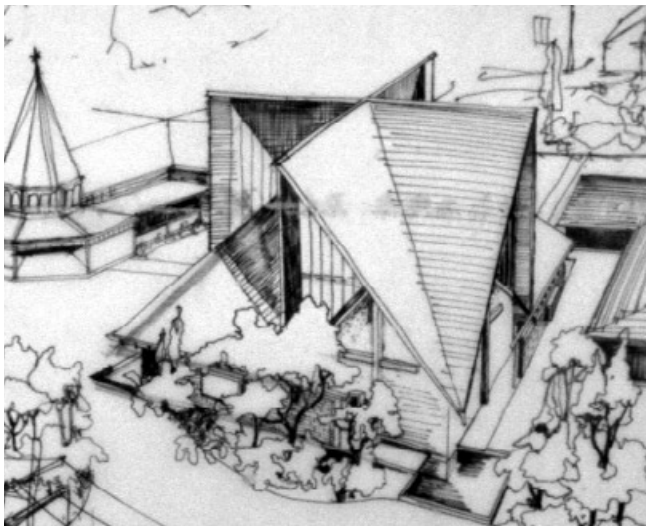
**Futuna Chapel Special**



John Scott's early sketches attempting a reconciliation between European and Maori forms



Qualities such as a large central column, steep sloping eaves and modest entrance have antecedents in Maori meeting houses



The combination of a square plan with roof ridges arranged in the form of a Greek cross creates a rich geometry

## Futuna Background

The Futuna Chapel was built to suit the needs of the Society of Mary, part of the Marist order which was founded in Lyons, France in 1824. The Society of Mary founded the Futuna Retreat Centre in Karori, Wellington in 1948, named in memory of the martyrdom of St. Peter Chanel on the French Polynesian Island of Futuna in 1841. An initial scheme for the Chapel was prepared in 1957 by one of the brothers of the order and architect Albert Kelly, but was rejected by the order as "conservative and derivative." The order subsequently approached John Scott to prepare a design in 1958. John Scott was the first Maori student at the University of Auckland, School of Architecture and had been in practice six years, when invited to design the chapel.

His design was controversial at the time; the initial response from the Society of Mary was, "it's a gazebo." The design, however, was defended and praised by several renowned architects and was finally approved in 1959 after an appeal to the Superior-General of the Marist Order in Rome.

The Chapel was opened in 1961 and was awarded the NZIA Gold medal for best building in 1968 and its 25-year award in 1986.



The Chapel under construction in 1960

## The Futuna Chapel Trust

In 2000 the Society of Mary deconsecrated the Futuna Chapel and sold the building to a property developer who planned to incorporate it into a residential development. During construction of residential units, it became apparent that the chapel was being used as a materials store and that parts of the Historic Places listed building had been damaged. Additionally, significant works, including a focal sculpture of the crucified Christ by Auckland artist, Jim Allen, had gone missing.

An interim injunction was ordered by the Wellington City Council to prevent any further damage and shortly after the sale of the chapel was negotiated to the Friends of Futuna Charitable Trust, a non-profit organization, dedicated to ensuring that the Futuna Chapel is preserved for future generations.

Under the Trust's ownership, the Chapel is intended to be a spiritual and architectural retreat, a home and display place for a Futuna Chapel archive, a place to be respected for its history and former use, and will be available for use in gentle ways such as lectures, meetings and performances.

In order to achieve the Trust's ambitions, it is seeking donations to pay off a \$60,000 interest free loan used in the purchase of the building and to contribute to continued restoration and development as a venue.

## Help Out

### Donations:

Donations can be made directly to the Trust and will be tax deductible. With permission, all donors will be acknowledged on the Trust's website. Sponsorship is available at the following levels: Platinum \$5000; Gold \$2500; Silver \$1000; Bronze \$500

### Membership:

The Friends of Futuna Society has been established by the Trust with the aim of seeking membership from the local community to assist with the ongoing maintenance and operating costs of the chapel and to support events. Members will receive a newsletter several times a year which will provide information on progress, news and events as well as information from the Futuna Chapel Archive.

To make a donation or join the Friends of Futuna Society or for more information contact:

### Friends of Futuna Charitable Trust

PO Box 6668  
Marion Square  
Wellington 6141  
Ph: (04) 568 8669



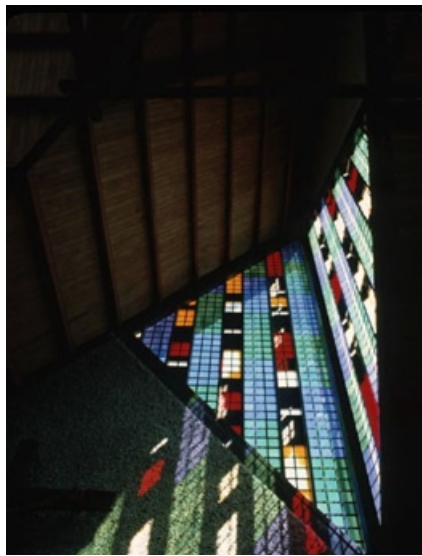
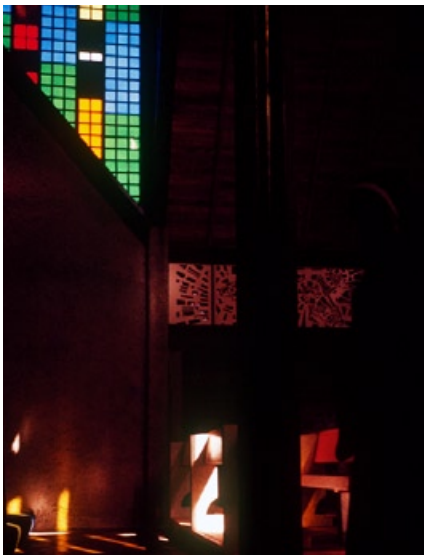
The Chapel, deteriorating and damaged, is in need of funds for restoration



malcolm walker...

Cartoon contributed by Malcolm Walker

All black and white photos from the Scott Family Archives and Trust Image Collection



All colour photos by Gavin Woodward

## The Chapel and Me

### A collection of academics and professionals offer their thoughts on the Futuna Chapel

#### Andrew Barrie - Prof. School of Architecture

For me, the interesting thing about Futuna is not that it is a great piece of architecture, but that it is a building that is taken seriously, perhaps more seriously than any other in the country. The building's significance stems not only from the potency of John Scott's work, but also from Russell Walden relentless advocacy for the building and from the many subsequent responses, refutations, and rejoinders. The challenge that Futuna presents, I think, is to place more buildings alongside it in the "serious architecture" category – let's think and write and argue in the same way about College House and All Saints Church and the Brake House and a hundred other buildings.

#### Julia Gatley - Prof. School Architecture

Some Auckland architects and academics like to think that they are over the Group. It's the same in Wellington with regard to Futuna. Nonetheless, at an architectural history conference in our School last year, three Wellington academics presented papers on Futuna. I responded by putting a photo of it on the cover of the conference proceedings. There was a public (well, academic) outcry: 'Futuna on the cover? Julia, aren't you over it yet?' Well actually, no I'm not, even though it's been with me for a long time now. In the 1980s I was one of the Vic students on whom Russell Walden rehearsed his mantra that New Zealand has no architecture other than Futuna. His site visit and essay on the building were mandatory in first year; and in fifth year the building became half of my BArch research report. I interpreted it as Gothic: structure articulated space and luminosity transformed it. I still subscribe to this view and therefore believe that there is much more at stake in the design of the building than the simple meeting of whare and woolshed. International journals of the 1950s confirm that more layered readings are necessary, by presenting numerous possible precedents, influences and parallels, notably the mid-century delight in using simple geometric shapes as generators of comparatively complex yet still rational architecture. So to the Wellingtonians out there I say, 'Futuna? Damn right!' And to you Aucklanders, 'The Group? Abso-friggin-lutely!' More on the latter in the next issue.

#### Bill McKay - Prof. School of Architecture

Everyone has their John Scott story or their Futuna experience and all sorts of myths are attached to both. Futuna has undeniable architectural qualities of course, after all four gold medals have this building at their centre and it has been the subject of a hagiography. But there are aspects of its veneration that make me uncomfortable. What fascinates me more is the extent to which it has captured the hearts and minds of a couple of generations of our country's modern architects and writers: Stacpoule and Beaven (1971): "one of the finest architectural experiences in New Zealand"

Mitchell (1984) "architecturally of our culture...distinctively ours... made in our own image"

Walden (1987): "a rich characterisation of Maori and Pakeha values in a natural setting...Here perhaps for the first time is New Zealand architecture"

Mane-Wheoki (1990) "blend(s) indigenous and International Modern ingredients"

Shaw (1991) "highly regarded as the central expression of a New Zealand modernist vernacular"

In those decades we were concerned with digesting overseas influences as well as the local, in pursuit of an architecture of national identity. It was also a time when Modernism faltered and architects searched for a more humanist alternative. It helped that Futuna was a building concerned with the spiritual rather than the prosaic; it's an exercise in architecture freed from quotidian constraints. It was our Ronchamp.

Aspects of its design and construction also helped cement itself into the canon: Scott was a bit of a maverick, the kind of bloke we liked to celebrate as an architect here. And the construction process had a kind of mythic kiwi do-it-yourself quality as well. Futuna's "marriage" of pakeha and Maori elements is also celebrated, but interestingly, mainly by pakeha. Maori journals, essays and reviews of the 60s don't mention Futuna: they focus much more on Scott's slightly later Maori Battalion Memorial in Palmerston North. That is a building, as Vanya Steiner pointed out, widely ignored by the profession, perhaps because of its uncomfortable presentation of two cultures side by side, rather than one subsumed by another. Futuna is a wonderful building but also a temple to that 1960s dream of one harmonious people in this happy land.

And unfortunately our desire to revere works of genius means that other architects allied with Scott, who had significant influence on the design, have been written out of history, at least until very recently when Peter Wood and Julia Gatley have looked at the context of Futuna's design.

Futuna is a wonderful building, enormously important in the history of New Zealand architecture, which we must not lose. But likewise, an exploration of its complexities, and those of Scott, will only make it a better, richer and more significant experience.

#### Pete Bossley - Pete Bossley Architects

One of that select group of buildings in the world that delighted me in unforgettable ways, Futuna Chapel offers an intensity of experience that puts it amongst the great 20th century chapels. Within its small scale it contrasts compression with soaring openness, and the apparent complexity of form resolves into the contemplative internal space in architecturally profound ways. The use of the materials, animated by dramatic natural light punctuated with slashes of vibrant colour from the stained glass, creates an almost medieval passion which also recalls the whare. From inside and out it has a great presence that belies its modest origins.