

Our Story - Where have we come from?

1964–1999 Manawatu Society for the Preservation of Horse-drawn Vehicles Inc



It was realised during the 1960s that many horse-drawn vehicles were not being preserved for future generations. Therefore a group of local enthusiasts created an organization to lessen the loss. The Society was established in 1964 with Mr Don McLennan as its first President. For the next 25 years a collection was assembled and several vehicles were restored. As the collection grew in numbers, by the early 1960s, the need for suitable premises had become an urgent priority.

The Society approached the Feilding and Districts Historical Society with a request to house the collection in Feilding and soon a working party was established, who investigated potential premises and made submissions to the Manawatu District Council for financial support.

1995–1997

Once the new Manawatu Historic Vehicle Collection Trust was established, the Preservation Society gifted the collection to the new Trust Board, satisfied that its original vision would be safe for posterity.

1998-2008 10 years of rapid growth and recognition



With a vehicle collection of historical importance and an exciting concept for the museum theme, the Trust then embarked upon an extensive and successful fund raising campaign. The 38-40 Bowen Street premises were purchased and from this point forward the museum told the story of the development of the Manchester Block and associated vehicles.

Over the years since the museum was opened there has been a steady growing recognition of the part the museum plays in preserving the heritage of the region. A major development in 2005 was the expansion of the Bowen Street display with the popular Guy Gallery exhibiting a growing number of restored, horse-drawn farm implements.

2006 saw the collaboration of like minded community groups; Feilding and Districts Historical Society, Feilding Genealogy Group and MHVC Trust Board who established the Feilding and Districts Community Archive to accession collate and house the many items of social history being offered for safe keeping.

2009-2012 Project Aorangi - Coach House Move and Expansion



In 2009 the offer of a nationally significant collection of John Deere tractors and ancillary machinery - the 'Crawshaw Collection', was donated. Other collections also offered were the local and Internationally noteworthy 'Jim Spall Collection', The 'Cheltenham

Dairy Company Burford Truck', the 'Police Museum Buggy' and 'Motat Wheelwright Machinery'. All of these gave the Trust belief that the opportunity was there to further expand the agricultural development of the Manawatu Region and expand the range of historic interest. With the availability of a long term lease of a large, well-located building from the Higgins family, the Trust grasped the opportunity.

Funding from Friends of the Coach House, Manawatu District Council, Central Energy Trust and Eastern & Central Community Trust, moved Project Aorangi forward.

The development has encompassed the erection of a large new entrance foyer to house the Archive, cafe area, kitchen and toilet facilities, before entering the display gallery. Development of the mezzanine floor is planned, which will give space for a large meeting room. The Display Gallery was reroofed (where required) by contractors and displays, lighting and internal walls were erected by volunteers.

The development was tagged 'Project Aorangi'. It involved over 8000 hours of volunteer labour in moving the existing collection and Archive, renovating, re-fitting and preparing the new building and its displays. The Coach House Museum continues to be run by volunteer energy and enthusiasm, overseen by the Museum Manager who reports directly to the Trust.

The Coach House Museum re-opened its doors in its new location on 6th May 2012. A blessing ceremony was performed, followed by an official Opening Ceremony.

The Coach House Museum is an outstanding new home for our rural stories.