



NEW ZEALAND FOUNDERS SOCIETY INC. HAWKE'S BAY BRANCH

A group of 31 members attended an afternoon tea at the Old Woollen Mill in Main Street Napier on 13 September 2026. Not only was this a very early business in Napier but it is also in the oldest street in Napier. Main Street was the first formal road, carved out during the town's early European development in the 1850's running through Onepoto Gully towards Carlyle Street.

The Old Woollen Mill was established in 1902 when a group of sheep farmers set up the Hawke's Bay Woollen Manufacturing Company Limited. Numerous products were made there and traded from the site. Over the years and post-earthquake, it continued under different names. The latest being in 1973 when Kane Carding Company operated carding wool for crafts people to revive spinning and weaving. In 1995 it ceased to operate and since then it has been a venue for functions.

While this was our venue for today, our speaker was Megan Williams who has been involved with the Hawke's Bay Heritage Trails since its inception in 1990. They have a small committee of like-minded people you love the history of Hawke's Bay. Phillip Mardon, one of our members, is on that committee. This organization is very much aligned with ours.

The Hawke's Bay Heritage Trails have been developed and updated to over 35 years. There are 22 in total, most of these are in Hastings, 4 in Napier/Wairoa and some in Central Hawkes Bay. When this concept was started Regional Councils around the country were supporting Trails in their areas but as funding has dried up Hastings District Council is the only council still supporting them. The work involved for each trail map can take over a year to plan, research and have published. The key requirements for the sites and areas are scenic, history/cultural and people. They will research a site, old house or property to find the history that goes with it.

Some of the trails are on roadsides with signage to show an area of interest or walking trails. This was a good opportunity to hear Megan and plan some summer outings.

The link below will take on these journeys, or you can visit the Old Woollen Mill.

<https://www.hastingsdc.govt.nz/hastings/about-hastings/history-heritage/heritage-trails/>

<https://sites.google.com/stepandaway.com/theoldmill/about-the-old-mill?authuser=0>
