



A Story of the Land St. Philip's, St. Heliers



Photo Credit: St. Philip's 2024. St. Philip's Parish Website, www.stphilips.nz

At the Diocesan Synod 2024, Motion 3 (moved by Grace Cox and seconded by the Rev'd Joel Carpenter) called for our Diocesan Council to, “establish a process for the diocese to learn about the stories of our land and to establish a database to enable public access to these records.”

Background

St. Heliers is a seaside suburb of Auckland with a population of 11,710 as of June 2024¹. This suburb is popular amongst visitors for the beaches, cafés, and views of Rangitoto Island.

hoto Credit: Eastern Beaches Of Auckland City.jpg, Ingolfson photographer



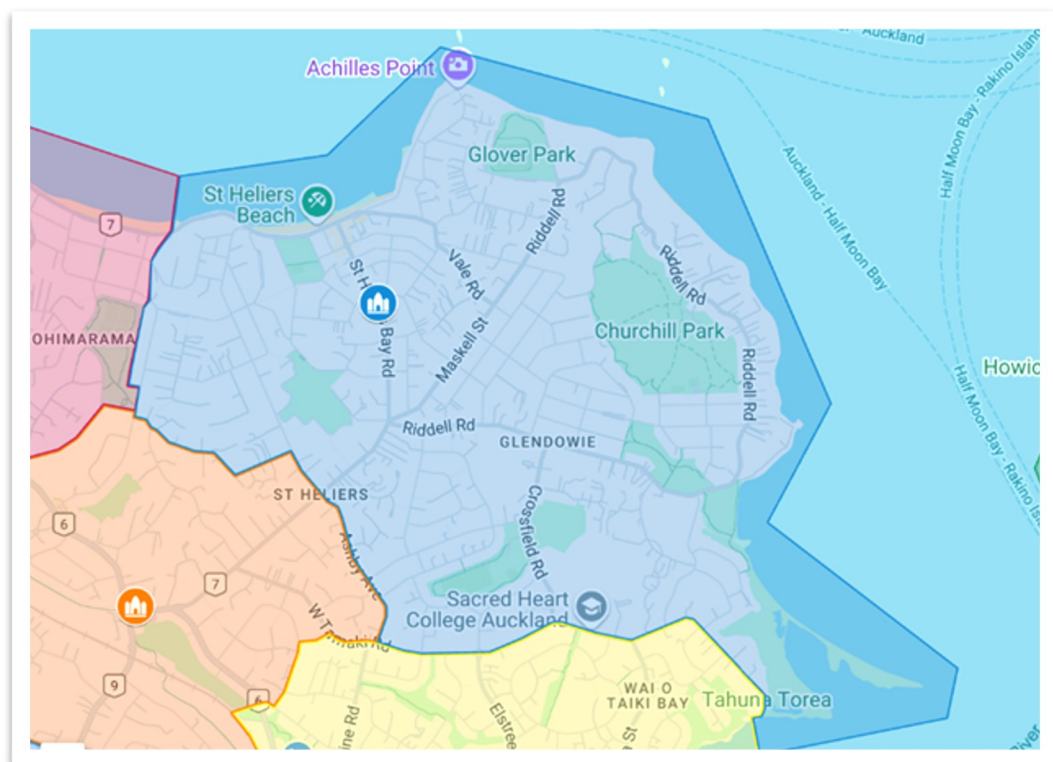
St. Heliers is located at the eastern end of Tamaki Drive. Local government of St. Heliers is the responsibility of the Ōrākei Local Board, which also covers the suburbs of Ōrākei, Kohimarama, Mission Bay, Glendowie, St. Johns, Meadowbank, Remuera and Ellerslie.

¹ "Aotearoa Data Explorer", Statistics New Zealand. Retrieved 26 October 2024.

Parish Boundary²

Boundary (anti-clockwise)

Starting Point	Via	To
Mouth of the local creek at the eastern end of Kohimarama Beach (east of Sage Rd)	(S) local creek	Melanesia Rd
	(S) eastern boundary of Madills Farm	Allum St
	(S) Allum St	Tarawera Tce
	(SE, NE) Tarawera Tce	Long Dr
	(SE) Long Dr, becoming Ashby Ave	West Tāmaki Dr
	(E, SE) West Tāmaki Dr becoming Tahaki Rd	Wai o Taiki Bay (on the Tāmaki River)
	(N) Tāmaki River	Waitematā Harbour
	(W) Waitematā Harbour	STARTING POINT



² "Parish Boundaries, Names and Physical Boundaries issued in accordance with the Parish Statute 2024, clause 8," Anglican Diocese of Auckland, March 2025.

The Story of St. Heliers - Pre-European

The area around Glover Park and Achilles Point was named Te Pane o Horoiwi ("The Head of Horoiwi") by Tainui iwi³. The name refers to the place where Horoiwi, one of the migrants aboard to Tainui waka, settled with his family in approximately the 13th century⁴.

Te Pane o Horoiwi pā was located at the end of The Rise, at the high point of the tuff ring of Whakamuhu/Glover Park, an extinct volcano⁵.



Photo Credit: Glover Park in Saint Heliers looking across to The Rise. Ingolfson Photographer.

Te Waiohua iwi traces its origin to a mingling of the people who first inhabited the area with members of Tainui who settled the area, such as Horoiwi⁶.

Around 1750, Ngāti Whātua expanded their territory further into Tāmaki Makaurau, displacing Te Waiohua. Ngāti Whātua gifted the land to Ngāti Pāoa in the late 1700s⁷. The area was abandoned in the 1820s due to raids by Ngāpuhi during the Musket Wars, however people returned to the area by the late 1830s⁸.

³ "Excavations at Te Pane o Horoiwi (N42/365), St Heliers, Auckland", Sewell, Brenda (1986).

⁴ "George Graham's Māori Place Names of Auckland", Simmons, D. R., 1979.

⁵ "Excavations at Te Pane o Horoiwi (N42/365), St Heliers, Auckland"

⁶ "Cultural Values Assessment by Te Ākitai Waiohua for Matukutūreia Quarry Private Plan Change" (PDF). Auckland Council, Te Ākitai Waiohua 2019

⁷ "Cultural Values Assessment by Te Ākitai Waiohua for Matukutūreia Quarry Private Plan Change" (PDF). Auckland Council, Te Ākitai Waiohua, 2019.

⁸ "St. Heliers Bay" Archaeopedia. 2011.

The Story of St. Heliers - The Kohimarama Block

The area around St. Heliers was a part of the Kohimarama Block, which was purchased by the British crown from Ngāti Pāoa in 1841⁹.

“The founders of Auckland lost no time in looking to acquire far more land than Ngati Whatua had sold to them in 1840.

In May 1841 they bought the Kohimarama block, a substantial chunk of today's eastern suburbs, from Ngati Paoa. The 6000-acre block extended from Mission Bay and St Heliers to the Panmure Basin. The Crown paid £100 in cash and £100 in goods.

Just before the Crown bought the Kohimarama block for £200 in cash and goods it had made £25,000 on the re-sale to settlers of a small portion of its first land purchase.

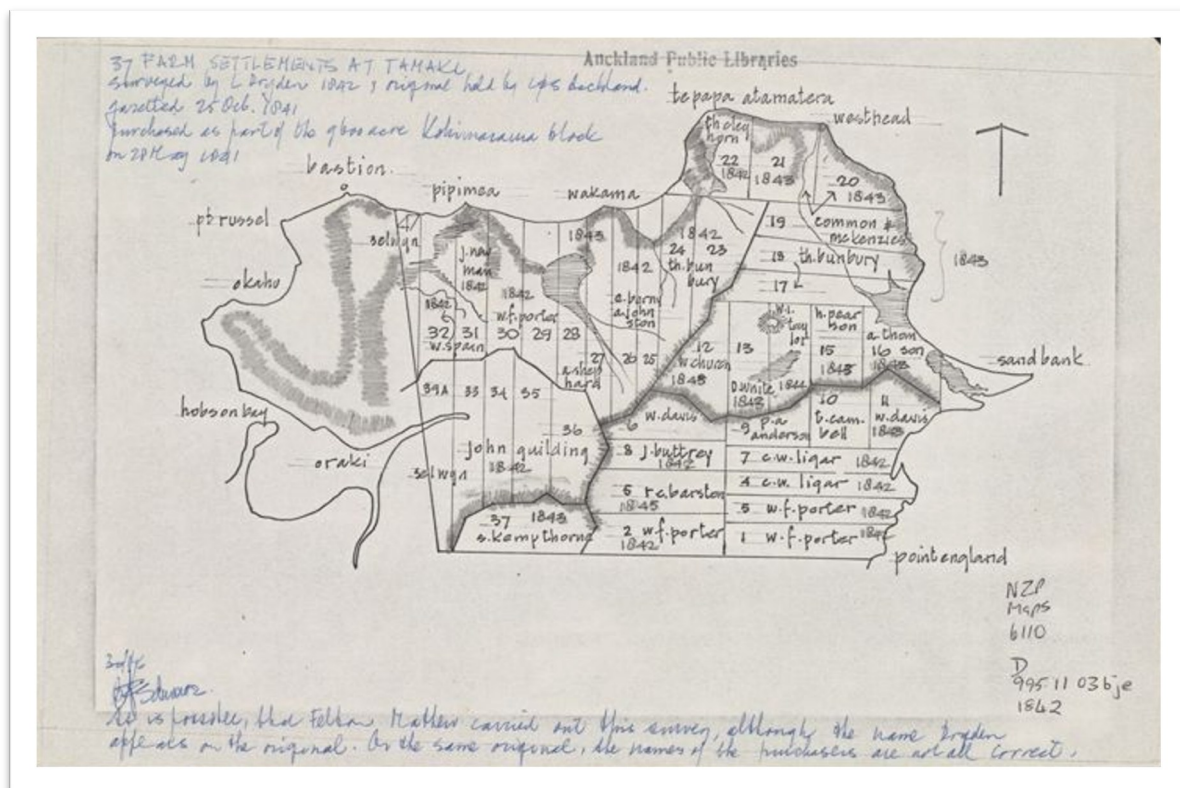


Photo Credit: 37 farm settlements at Tamaki surveyed by L Dryden 1842, original held at L and S Auckland gazetted 25 Oct 1842. Purchased as part of the 9600 acre Kohimarama block on 28 May 1841.

Auckland Libraries Heritage Collections Map 6110

⁹ "Eastern Parks Masterplan" (PDF). Auckland Council. 2012.

So why did Māori sell so cheaply? In a report commissioned by the Hauraki Māori Trust Board and the Marutuahu Confederation in 2006, historians Michael Belgrave, Grant Young and Anna Deason offered two possible explanations.

"First, the Māori sellers did not understand the extent to which their customary interests were being extinguished by the sale agreements; secondly, they understood there would be additional advantages to them occurring after the sale took place."

The report cites Ngati Paoa's belief that they would be given a piece of land as a trading base within the new Auckland settlement in return for the Kohimarama block. They briefly occupied a site at Mechanics Bay in this belief. A reserve was eventually set aside at St Georges Bay but it was put in trust to provide a hostel for all Māori visiting the town, and eventually for all "poor people".

Belgrave, Young and Deason write that, "there are very real difficulties in providing an authoritative argument on the nature of Māori understandings in these transactions. Partly this is because of the destruction through fire of many of the original records¹⁰."

¹⁰ "Auckland: Land for a pittance," John Roughan, NZ Herald 25 August 2010

Government Apology

As part of the Ngati Paoa Claims Settlement Bill in 2024, the Government offered this apology to Ngati Paoa:

Crown apology

The text of the apology offered by the Crown to the people of Ngāti Paoa, to your tūpuna and your mokopuna, as set out in the deed of settlement, is as follows:

“(a) The Crown profoundly regrets its failure to protect Ngāti Paoa from the rapid alienation of land in the decades following the signing of te Tiriti o Waitangi/the Treaty of Waitangi and the loss of life and the devastation caused by hostilities arising from its invasion of lands south of the Mangatāwhiri.

(b) The Crown has inflicted suffering upon you, its acts and omissions have prejudiced you, and laws and policies that it enacted in Aotearoa/New Zealand have led to the loss of your whenua and your taonga te reo Māori. The Crown has failed to uphold its obligations under te Tiriti o Waitangi/the Treaty of Waitangi and brought dishonour upon itself. For its breaches of te Tiriti o Waitangi/the Treaty of Waitangi and its principles the Crown unreservedly apologises.

(c) The Crown seeks to atone for these injustices, and hopes that through this settlement it can rebuild the relationship that it established with Ngāti Paoa in 1840, begin the process of healing, and enter a new age of co-operation with your people¹¹.”

In addition, some initial redress was granted by the Crown to Ngati Paoa:

- financial and commercial redress totalling \$23.5 million
- letters of facilitation or introduction to certain local authorities and central government agencies
- a cultural redress payment of \$1 million towards cultural revitalisation and the transfer of a property of cultural significance
- a conservation relationship agreement¹².

¹¹ "Ngati Paoa Claims Settlement Bill, NZ Government, 2024.

¹² "Ibid.

The Story of St. Heliers - European Settlement

European settlement began on the north-facing slopes of St. Heliers bay, with the establishment of the Glen Orchard homestead, believed to have been built in the 1850s. The building was recognised as a place of historic, architectural and social significance by Heritage New Zealand in October 2010¹³.

Glen Orchard is known as the residence of Lieutenant-General William Taylor (1790 - 1868), and his son Charles John Taylor, who married into the family of the fourth New Zealand Premier, Alfred Domett. William Taylor was a retired senior officer of the East India Company's Madras Army¹⁴.



Photo Credit: Glen Orchard Homestead, Auckland Libraries Heritage Collections 435-11-14

In 1879 Glen Orchard became Auckland's first stud farm, managed by Major Walmsley, who suggested the name St. Heliers Bay, supposedly because it reminded him of the fashionable holiday resort Bay of Saint Helier in Jersey¹⁵.

¹³ "Glen Orchard". McKenzie, Joan in Heritage New Zealand, 14 September 2010.

¹⁴ "Ibid

¹⁵ "Ibid

The Story of St. Heliers - Residential development

In November 1881 St Heliers Bay was bought by the St Heliers and Northcote Land Company. The aim of this company was to make the land available for residential development. Despite advertisements in The New Zealand Herald land sales were poor and the company's scheme failed.¹⁶

The advertisement indicates the need for better transport links. The St Heliers and Northcote Land Company built a 460m (1500 foot) pier at St Heliers in 1882 before becoming insolvent. However, the tramway connection to Auckland was never realised. By 1890 St Heliers had become a popular waterfront destination for day trippers, with excursions running from Auckland and Thames¹⁷.

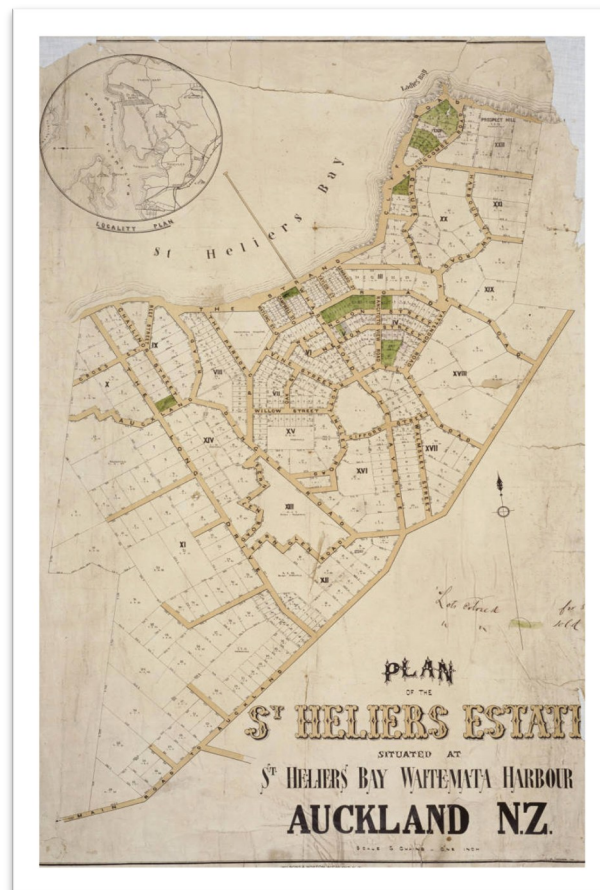


Photo Credit: St. Heliers Estate Advertisement, Auckland Libraries Heritage Collections Map 4264

After Tamaki Drive was opened in 1932, St Heliers became a commuter suburb of Auckland City¹⁸.

¹⁶ "Delving Into The Past of Auckland's Eastern Suburbs: Section 6 St. Heliers Bay," Elizabeth T. Jackson 1976.

¹⁷ "Ibid

¹⁸ "Ibid

The Story of St. Heliers - The First St Philip's.

The Warden of St John's, Rev.P.S.Smallwood, became the first Vicar of the Parish of Tamaki West in 1889 and it was he who saw the need for better provision for the people of St Heliers. He arranged for services to be conducted in a private house and for Sunday School to be held in a tent on the adjoining tennis court.

One of his students, Cecil Watson, was given responsibility for this outpost and in 1897 he personally collected £60 from his growing congregation to buy a church site on the corner of St Heliers Bay Road (then Wharf Road) and Paunui Street from the River Plate Co.

Cecil Watson's fine architecturally designed church was to cost £600 so a more modest wooden structure 50ft by 20ft with an iron roof was put up by two local builders for £200.



Photo Credit: St. Philip's 1902, St. Philips Parish Website, www.stphilips.nz

It had seating for eighty with the chancel able to be shut off by folding doors when the body of the church was used for social events. No dancing allowed!

The church was more modest than people had hoped for and was not expected to serve for many years. Little did they know!

The St Heliers Church of St Philip, decorated with arum lilies and ferns, was opened 9th October 1898. The Curate, Rev. C.A.B. Watson, became the first Vicar and served until 1902. The church had a small organ and three kerosene lamps were suspended from the timbered ceiling. Electricity was installed about 1910 made possible by an extension from a private generator nearby. There was no interior lining or heating though some lining and a small wood-burning stove were added forty years later!¹⁹



Painting of St Philip's Church by Andrew Reid

¹⁹ "St. Philip's A Parish History," Colin Percy, 1998 (adapted)

The Story of St. Heliers - The Second St. Philip's

As early as the 1920's, plans were underway for a new Church and hall. Designed by Mr C. Towle it was to be an imposing stone structure to seat six hundred as a centre of worship for the eastern suburbs - even a future Cathedral perhaps?

Plans were completed in 1938 but it was to cost £66,000 well beyond the £1500 in hand. There was rapid residential expansion in the years after World War II.

Churches had been built in Orakei (St James) and Kohimarama (St Andrews) with the Church of St Thomas rebuilt in the late 50s. So with the subdivision of the extensive and now populous Parish of Tamaki West, the Parish of St Heliers and Glendowie became centred on the tiny, overcrowded wooden church of St Philip. A 1945 addition provided seating for 112 but this fell far short of what was required within an active parish.

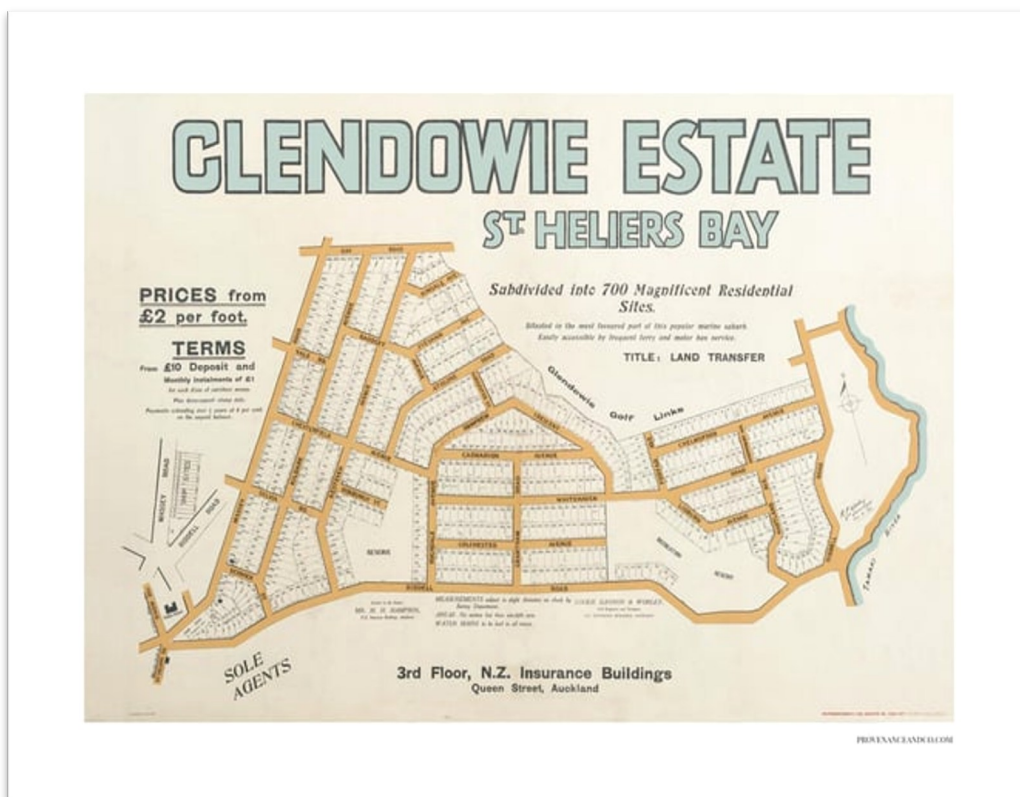


Photo Credit: Glendowie Estate Map 1948 (Restored), reddit.com/auckland

The growing suburb of Glendowie with farms and market gardens giving way to residential sections, repeated the St Heliers story. Sunday services were held in a private home and Sunday School was conducted for children of all denominations in a nearby garage. Later a boatshed was made available but after frequent flooding it was decided to move to higher ground.

A section was purchased in Colchester Avenue for a hall and classroom block to be used both for the Sunday School and for church services. Sunday School was big business in those days with over 400 students and teams of teachers in three different locations. And fund raising was also very big business as the Reverend James Mee and a determined parish pressed on towards a new church.

A breakthrough for a new St. Philip's came when for £10,000 the Parish was able to buy the present site, previously the home of the late Bishop Averill and family. A new design by Mr Reynolds of Kingston, Reynolds, Thom and Alladice for a church and hall was prepared and this complex was built in 1959 - 60 for £60,000.

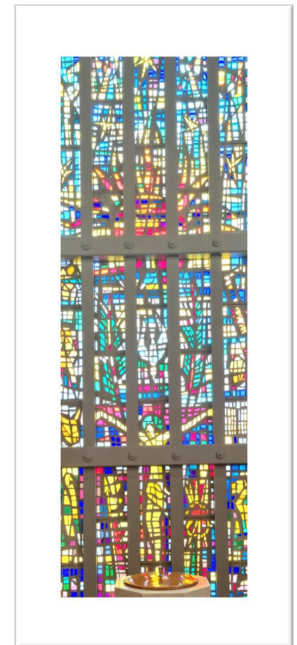
Sales of property plus pledges raised £40,000 and a £20,000 loan was secured. The new church was dedicated on 19th June 1960 by Bishop Caulton who preached to a congregation of seven hundred filling the church and the hall and spilling out into the street.

A reflection on the new church was offered by Rev'd David Guthrie who grew up in the parish:

'I know this building just about inside out. However it is with the old St Philip's across the road, that a great many of my memories from earliest childhood to late teens are associated with it. I am astonished at how vividly every detail of the old church remains etched in my memory... That small wooden structure, inanimate, finds living form in the lives of those who worshipped in her. And

so, too with this 'new' St Philips.

I watched this building rise day by day. I lived just up the road and caught my bus outside here each morning. Few days passed but that I didn't wander the construction site, seeing the floor being laid, the concrete trusses rise, the brickwork being filled in. I recall the intense excitement at the installation of the west window. Nothing like it had been seen in this country before. For sheer richness of colour it is still unrivalled in my experience. Yes, this building too, entered my psyche, moulded my spirituality and my theology.



West Window

So we approach the act of consecrating this building. We will consecrate ourselves as that community of people who 'work' here. The idea of consecration is the setting apart a person, a thing, or a building to be in the service of God. In consecrating this building we are declaring that it is set apart as the frame that surrounds the sacred liturgy which takes place when the people of God meet... This building is charged with sacred presence and sacred moment.'

(Address continued)

Across the way, the original church was on the move to its new site alongside the church hall in Glendowie. There as the Church of St James it served local parishioners for many years and built a very supportive congregation who loved the old familiar building. But as the declining attendances of the seventies moved into the eighties, as inflation began to bite into weekly offerings, and as the original loan repayments became more pressing, the decision was made to consolidate the parish on St Philip's.

The original wooden church, such an important part of the life of St Heliers and Glendowie since 1898, was gifted to the Parish of Te Atatu

²⁰ "Ibid

where now as the Church of St Paul it continues to be loved and enjoyed by an appreciative congregation.



Photo Credit: St. James 1964, St. Philips Parish Website, www.stphilips.nz

The hall and its site in Colchester Avenue was sold in 1982. Plans for further improvements replacing a courtyard garden with the present lounge and altering both the kitchen and the front entrance began in 1986. At the time of the centennial celebrations in 1998 further improvements to the kitchen were made, a lift for the less able was installed, and the church ceiling was replaced and insulated.²⁰



Photo Credit: St. Philip's 125 Anniversary Countdown