

Gates' fate hinges on heritage status

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Heritage experts are having another look at the significance of the ornate gates at the crumbling Barrett St Hospital in New Plymouth.

Colin Comber, the council's environmental strategy and policy manager, said the gates could be saved if they were awarded a Category I heritage rating.

Last month the *Taranaki Daily News* revealed that the Ministry of Justice was proposing a full-site clearance of the landbanked complex, including the gates.

In the mid-90s the gates and the wall were awarded a Category II rating, but this would not prevent them from

being bulldozed, Mr Comber said.

However, Category I status meant they could not be demolished without a resource consent from the council.

"We are basically doing this to see if the items have gained any greater heritage value now than what they had 20-odd years ago," he said.

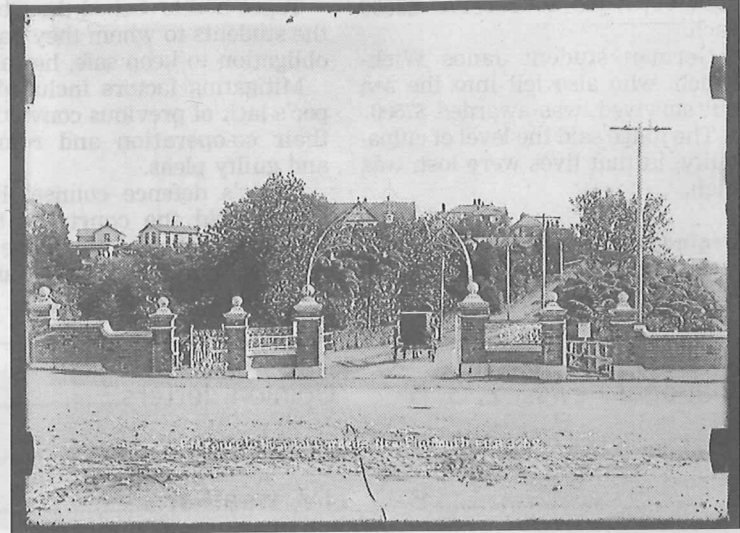
The independent heritage evaluator started work on the assessment last week and is expected to have completed the task by early November.

The gates were designed by New Plymouth architect Frank Messenger and were erected in 1909.

Mr Messenger designed or helped design 315 buildings and monuments in the district, including the 1924 New Plymouth Cenotaph and the 1909 verandah of New Plymouth's former White Hart Hotel.

Mr Comber said the council ordered the assessment of the gates, the Dawson St wall and the former doctor's residence after the sole resident of the complex, Carla MacKinnon, went public with her plans to campaign to save the gates.

Miss MacKinnon has lived in the former doctor's residence, known as Baker Cottage, since July and said she had been



Golden gates: A 1913 picture of the gates of the former Barrett St Hospital, which were constructed in 1909.

working with the heritage evaluator and providing him with copies of her research.

"I'm so pleased the council are getting the gates assessed," she said.

The 29-year-old said since appearing in the *Daily News* she had been approached by many people who wanted to help her with her plan to save the gates and restore the gardens.

"Someone even offered a water blaster. And the last gardener of the complex came to

tell his story and offer his help too," she said.

Miss MacKinnon isn't the only person clearing the gardens on the Fulford St side of the property.

"The PD boys have been out there getting rid of all of the rubbish that had been dumped and removing the old trees too.

"It's looking amazing and it's great that the community and the council have really got behind this idea of saving something from demolition."

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