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# Of passing interest

Historical features in our landscape observed by the director of Puke Ariki **Kelvin Day.**

## St Mary's Peace Memorial Hall, New Plymouth

This year sees the start of centennial commemorations marking the start of World War I or, as it was known at the time, the Great War. Following the conclusion of the war in 1918, attention turned to the erection of suitable memorials. The parishioners of St Mary's church in New Plymouth decided that they would give thanksgiving for the ending of the war by constructing a "Peace" hall next to an existing school and hall. The building was designed by the New Plymouth architectural firm of Messinger,

Griffiths and Taylor. After many years of fundraising, the commemoration stone was laid by New Plymouth Mayor Frank Wilson on June 1, 1924. The contract for the construction of the hall was given to J and T Julian and Son Ltd, the price being £3550. St Mary's Peace Memorial Hall was officially opened on November 7, 1924 by Bishop Averill. At this time there was still a shortfall of £300 in the building fund, but a fundraising event held on the opening day secured a healthy profit, making the building debt-free. Just a few days after it was opened, a young woman, Audrey Eberlet (later Audrey Gale), who was living nearby, noticed smoke coming from the rear of the building. A bag of wood shavings placed against the building was set alight but quick-thinking Audrey managed to extinguish this with a bucket of water. Over the years, the hall has served the community well, being used for meetings and Sunday schools. During World War II, the Taranaki Hospital Board used it as an emergency hospital.

