

The Wellesley Club, in existence for 125 years, is sadly now in the process of closing. Membership has been steadily waning, and today's society has diminished interest in traditional clubs.

At a Special General Meeting in 2014, club members decided to cease operating as a club and to dispose of all the Club's assets. It is fair to say that some controversy around shareholder funding for potential seismic strengthening of the Wellesley Building was a contributing factor.

In recognising the heritage value of the Club as part of New Zealand's society, the Club was keen to find a way to preserve the memory of the Club for posterity. The Club committee had developed a strong relationship with the Wellington Club, which led to an agreement with the Wellington Club to rename its Wellington Room, to become the Wellesley Room which would house and display certain Wellesley Club memorabilia.

Of particular significance is the Club's caricature collection, which Club members were keen to see preserved as a collection and available for viewing, rather than being broken up or sold into private ownership. In the absence of any public institution prepared to meet the Club's requirements, it was particularly gratifying that the Wellington Club has become the new custodian of the collection, a selection of which is now on display there.

The Club no longer organizes activities for members, apart from AGMs that are necessary while the Club remains an incorporated society. Another exception was the very successful November 2016 function to celebrate the Club's 125th anniversary, the opening of the Wellesley Room and the preservation of key memorabilia.

For the future, all that remains is for the Club to sell its shares in Wellesley Westminster Limited (the company that owns the Wellesley Building) then to work through the inevitable winding-up process.

Some Wellesley Club members have now joined the Wellington Club. This is a traditional private club with a strong and professional operation with many facilities for members, the Wellington Club has an online presence at www.wellingtonclub.co.nz

Grant Purdie
WELLESLEY CLUB PRESIDENT