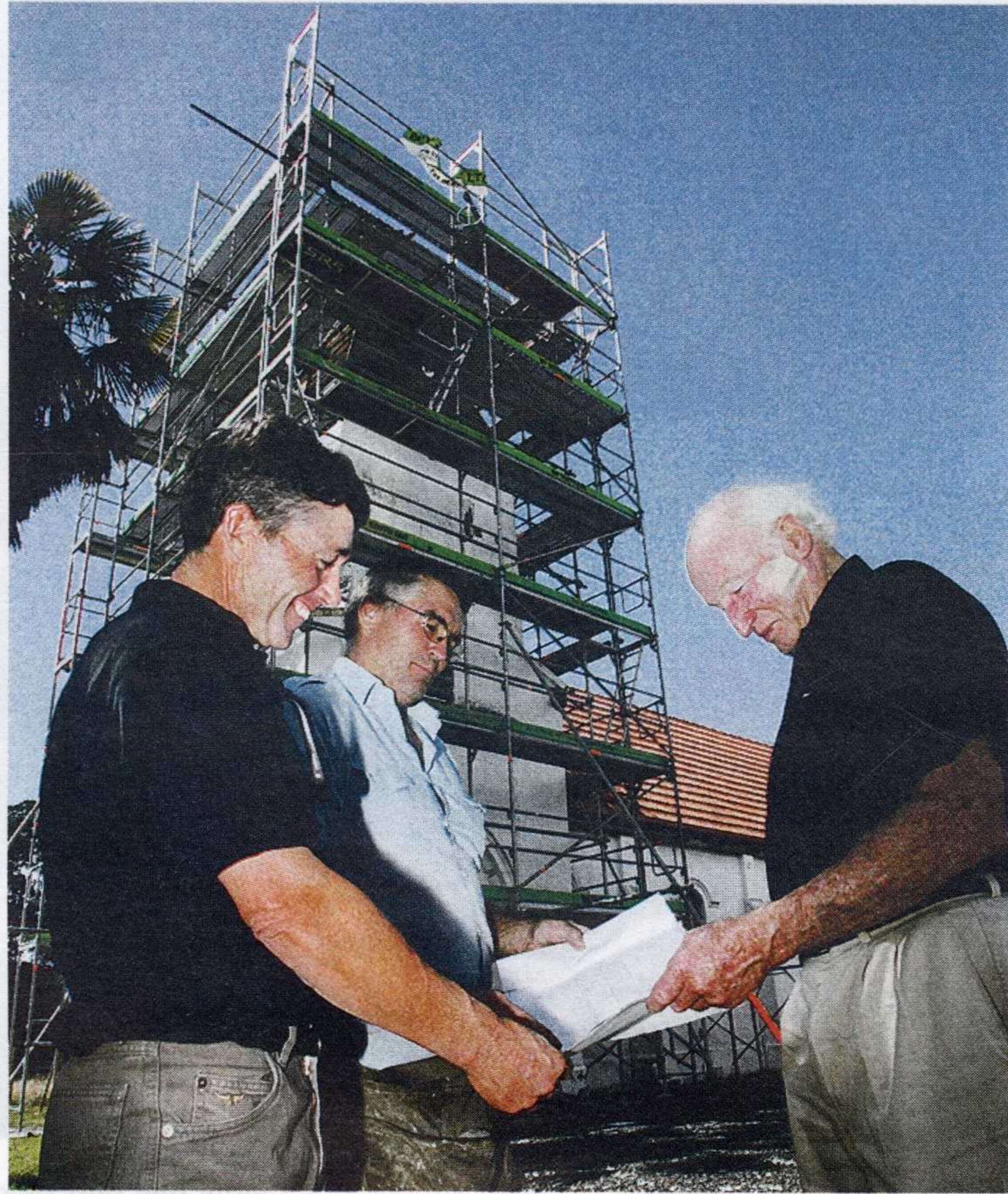


RIGHT: Bill Beamish, local farmer and parishioner, Warren Struthers, builder and David Hildreth restoration committee discuss renovations to the 80 year old St George's Chapel at Crownthorpe.



St George's chapel



On 21 September this year, at St George's Chapel, Crownthorpe, history near-repeated itself. Eighty-seven years after the opening dedication ceremony, a second dedication was held, this time for recently-completed restorations destined to preserve the chapel's valuable historical and architectural heritage for generations to come.

The bell, silent for many years, rang out and as at the first dedication, the little country church was full to overflowing. Vestry and restoration committee chairman David Hildreth says the enthusiastic support for the restoration from local people who, despite tough farming times, contributed almost half the \$275,000 needed, is testimony to St George's treasured status as both a repository of local history and a living building.

Built in 1921 by landowner James Coleman in memory of his son Herbert who was killed on service in France during World War I, St George's is one of only two churches in Waiapu Diocese's Puketapu Parish (the other is St Michael's at Puketapu). The thick concrete walls and farm-surrounded churchyard have witnessed important family milestones for several generations; regular services, both Anglican and Presbyterian, are still held there, and on ANZAC Day, the congregation swells to more than 100.

After World War I, the Colemans relinquished their 3000-acre farm

for soldiers' resettlement and many of the 30 returned servicemen allocated land, as well as their descendants, are buried in the chapel's cemetery. Still used today, it reads like a long genealogy of local families.

Hastings architect Graham Linwood was called in four years ago when it became apparent earlier efforts to arrest the chapel's deteriorating condition had been unsuccessful. He says the Natusch-designed church is "a beautiful little Romanesque-style building, as important architecturally as it is socially."

"It's one of the few local examples of good architecture to survive the 1931 earthquake. The scale and proportions are superb and the concrete construction is unusual for the time. All the materials would have been carted from the river by horse and dray and the timber hand-milled in the district."

Sympathetic to the district's wish that repair work should preserve the integrity of the chapel, Graham in turn called in Wellington conservation specialists, architect Chris Cochran and engineer Win Clark. Their investigations revealed the impressive nature of the original workmanship and together the three prepared a conservation plan detailing structural restorations that would leave the chapel's appearance in tact.



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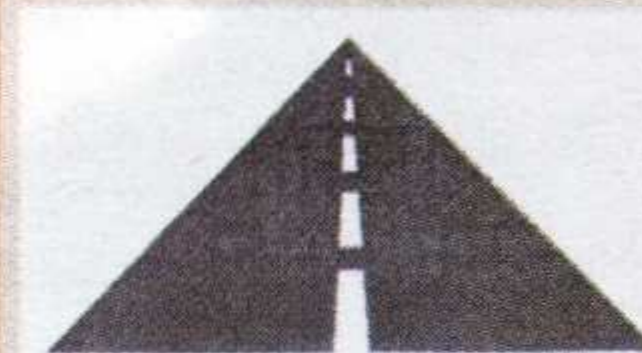
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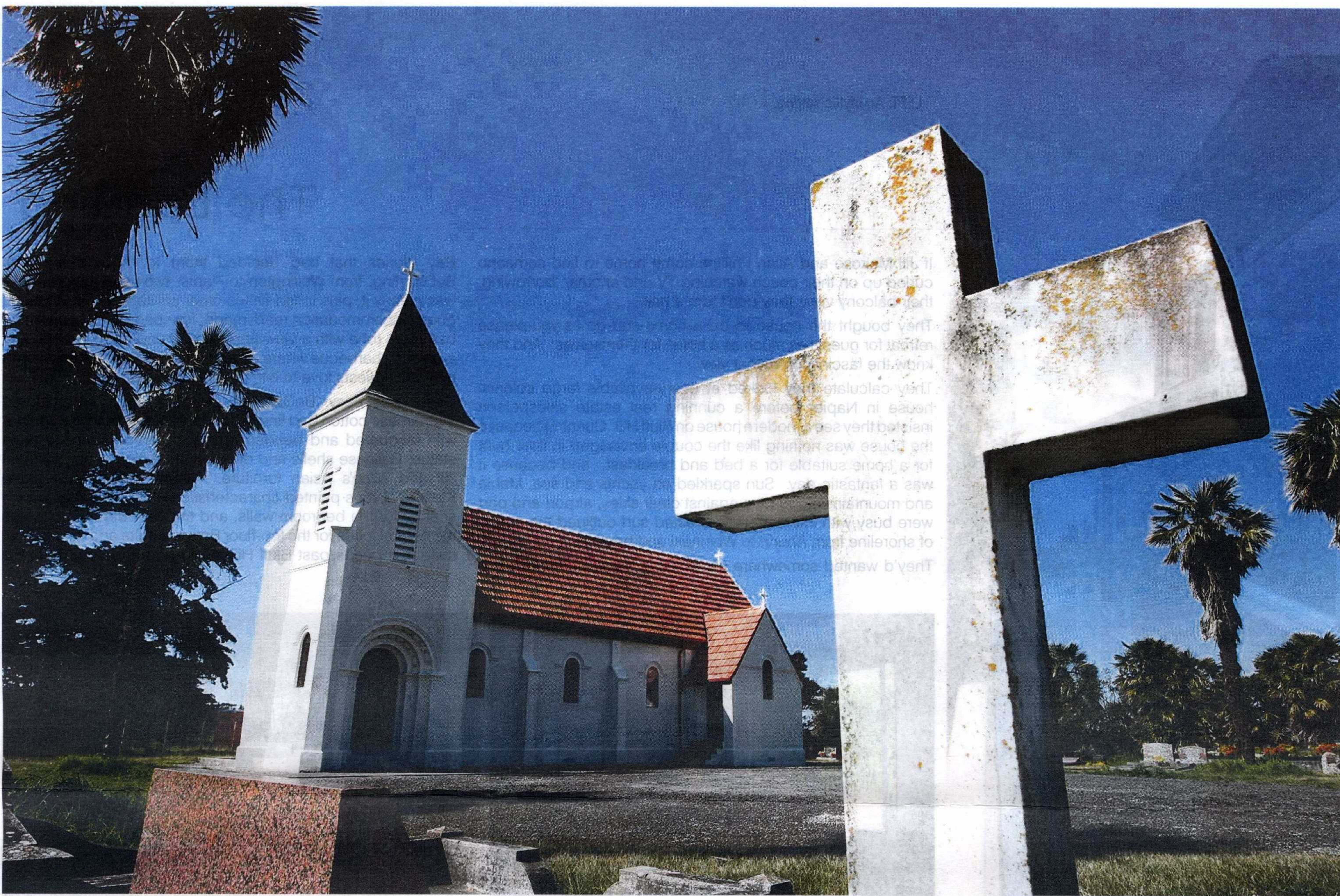
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The project was to be the first significant work on the church since 1949 when the original Norman crenellated tower, damaged in Hawke's Bay's 1931 earthquake, was replaced with a steeple. It included injecting concrete invisibly into cracks as strengthening, restoring native timbers in the eastern-end gables and the steeple, roof repairs, new exterior stucco, and, in a few small concessions to the

modern era, new lighting and heating.

The plan supported funding applications to Eastern and Central Community Trust, Lotteries Grants Board and JN Williams Trust, all of which responded generously, then in February this year it was over to Hawke's Bay specialists. While Haumoana glassworker John Owens restored the English-made stained glass windows, Morgan Builders,

under site manager Warren Struthers, handled the building restoration.

Graham says the special nature of the project inspired all involved. The community, design team, contractors and subcontractors all put "heart and soul" into the work and the high standard of workmanship that resulted is a testament to their commitment.



ABOVE:
St Georges
Chapel, Interior
ceiling after
the renovations.

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