



The rescue mission with Mr. David Harre

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By Maurice Smyth

Historic gift to Wanganui a labour of love.

David Harre loves old buildings with such passion he's devoted his life to saving them. And because he believes Wanganui has done such a great job preserving its past, he's about to give the city a gift - a restored, working tram which first clanged its bell there on September 26, 1912.

Next year it will be moving again, carrying tourists and city residents.

For Mr Harre, it was a five-year labour of love inside a large shed he built in his back garden at Oratia, west Auckland.

On behalf of the society he formed to see the project through, he will hand over the tram to the people of Wanganui at a ceremony next month.

Mr Harre also restored the house that Rewi Alley built in a remote part of south Taranaki. And he and his wife live in the house where he was born, built in the late 1800s.

The past is all around - a vintage Austin 7 convertible, and an ancient steam engine that coughs into life to cook shellfish when it's party time.

In pride of place is tram number 12, built by the Boon Tramcar company of Christchurch.

It was while taking a break in Wanganui from his Rewi Alley work that Mr Harre decided the city deserved a reward.

He remembered seeing No 12 tram in a collapsing shed at Pt Chevalier. After lying derelict in the sandhills of Wanganui's Castlecliff it had been moved by a collector to Auckland

Mr Harre bought it for \$10,000, borrowed from his four children, and two ship's chairs from the inter-island ferry Penguin. Then began years of restoration, cadging material and fund-raising. Money came from sources such as Lotto and Pub Charity and donations included a \$2000 cheque from a Wellington QC.

When last-minute painting and wiring is complete, No 12 will be trucked next month to its new home. Wanganui has planned a 1.4km route connecting various cultural locations.

The intention is for the tram to be self-funding, said Mr Harre, "but more important for me is that it's a gift of mutual heritage, for Maori and Pakeha, old and young, and those who visit, to enjoy for years to come".