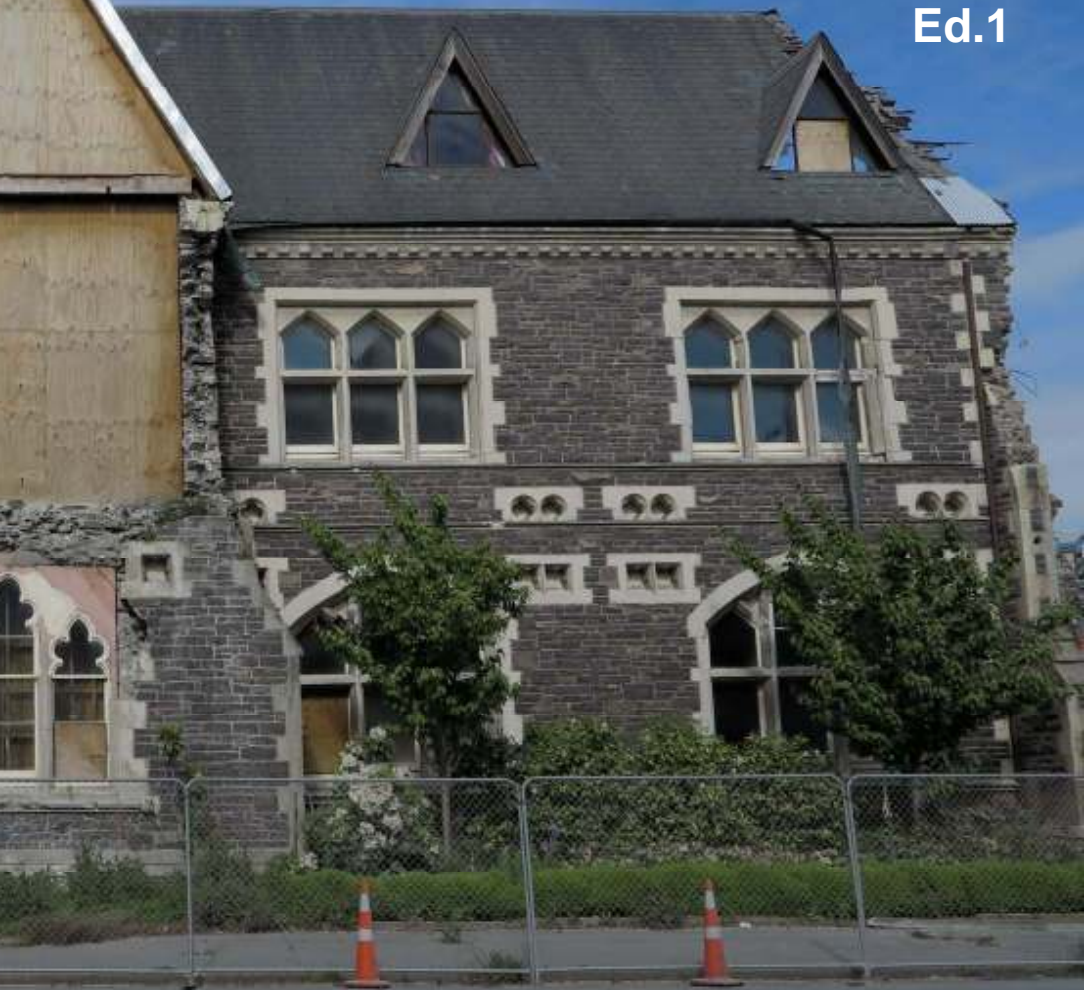


Cranmer Court

the unfinished story

Ed.1



a collection of video descriptions following the
destruction of a heritage icon, plus wider social issues
written in 2012 by YouTube user: adxnz

published by adxnz
Christchurch, New Zealand

edition 1, first printed 07/04/13

based on YouTube video descriptions, © 2012
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Cover picture: Remains of the west wing taken 28 October 2012, on day 25 of demolition. This is actually the 1878 kindergarten addition built after the school had already opened. Not that you can see it here, but the style of the addition was slightly different from the original. The entire building was approximately 4 times longer in an L shape.

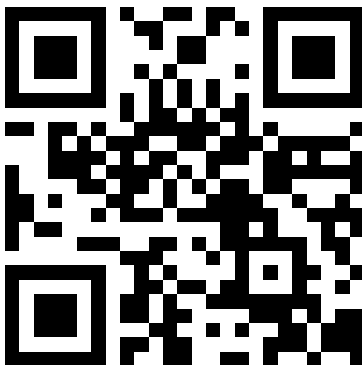
Preface

This booklet is a collection of descriptions originally posted alongside my YouTube videos of "Heritage Destruction in Christchurch" - daily updates of the Cranmer Court demolition in October 2012. I thought making it into a booklet might make more sense, since people read books. It is an evolving story. It branches out beyond the destruction of this particular building, into the wider and social aspects of the quakes from a local perspective, and will hopefully contain some surprising insights for some people. Of course it would help to watch the videos, but the words sort of stand on their own - however if you do, be aware the footage is quite long, since it's more of a reference than any sort of prepackaged story ready for your consumption.

- Chapters are numbered from the day since demolition started (some days missing, some doubled up, and some are yet to be added at the end).
- There is a QR code, and text hyperlink to each video.
- The text is original and unedited, typos and all. All I've done to it is some formatting to better suit a booklet format (although it still has a "text only" feel - words in capitals etc).
- YouTube video descriptions are limited to 5000 characters (about 1000 words), so some chapters may seem too cut back (the extras may appear in future editions). That's probably a good thing, considering this first edition is 70 pages!
- Although the content is fairly political due to the nature of the problems discussed, I have tried to remain impartial and objective. This work was extensively researched, and I was very careful to get my facts straight before making claims or insulting people. References couldn't originally be included due to lack of space, but as always, can be requested on the video's comments where I was expecting to respond and explain.
- My descriptions deal with the deaths of actual people in a fairly unemotional and presumptive way. This is for a reason. I mean no offence, and if any relatives or friends feel strongly about something I have said, please have your say on the YouTube comments pages.
- There is also the odd mild swear word.
- At the time of printing this first edition at least, since the break of Christmas 2012, the screaming transgressions against democracy seem to have stepped down a notch - the city isn't having daily protests over water, heritage demolitions, school closures, democracy and the like - things that were all over the news in 2012 (now it's just the housing crisis, ongoing insurance ripoffs, and privacy leaks). Have the people won? Read on to work out what I probably think about that.

Heritage Destruction in Christchurch - Cranmer Courts day 1

video uploaded and text published to YouTube 08/10/12



<http://youtu.be/wJuYMwpa9ts>

Footage taken on Thursday 4 Oct 2012, day 1 of demolition.
Cranmer Court building - for an old photo check out image 6 at:
<http://www.savecanterburyheritage.org.nz/cranmer-court>

I can see both sides of the argument (or maybe there's more?), it really is a tricky situation for all involved, tied up in loops with insurance, financing, politics, safety, etc etc etc. The government doesn't want to know. Christchurch people are busy with insurance, repairs, and broken businesses (mostly broken by attitudes, not directly by the earthquakes).

I don't really have any particular connection to this building, but it does seem strange they are tearing it down when: It's not dangerous, it doesn't cost anything to keep it standing, it's not particularly expensive to fix considering the values of city real estate, it is a key heritage site in the city, and a large minority (more than 30%) of the population want to see it stay. It was quite strange to be metres from the facade, filming this as cars honked support for the protestors, but otherwise business as usual.

Before you even think of arguing with the above points, engage your brain and consider the big picture. Some blatantly and uncomfortably obvious facts remain;

1/ Three years ago there'd be tens of thousands of people up in arms over a building like this being demolished, you could guarantee a crowd of at least a thousand down there. (A minority, sure, but still a lot of people.) Now there's 10? These are the SAME people - think about that. NZers are well known for being a "compliant market", but this is taking even that to

the extreme. Even sheep are less compliant. There's something seriously wrong.

- 2/ It's coming down in the name of safety - not actual safety, but propaganda that isn't backed up with anything real (like a credible risk analysis). Apparently the uninhabited building that has stood up to over 10000 earthquakes (including the devastating ones) is going to explode and jump out and kill the population of the city, because it's "unsafe". Sheeple these days lap that sort of thing up.
- 3/ Unless there's some fashionable backlash against "anything old" in 20 or 50 years from now, future generations will definitely ask what we were on, incredulous at how stupid "people back then" were. This perception is inevitable, it's embarrassing to know this is going to be our legacy.
- 4/ Apparently it would have taken around 30 million dollars to bring up to code. Too much for the 31 owners, or one body corporate. But the total bill for reconstruction of the city is something like 30 billion. That's 0.1% of the budget, for a very large building near the top of the historic places list. Or the value of about 50 average houses at today's prices (less than two for each of the 31 units in Cranmer Courts), when say 10000 houses have been written off. So ultimately, it can't be about the money.
- 5/ The big one; the value of the land under the building isn't dependent on what's on the land (unless it's worth more with a historic building off it...). In fact it actually costs the owners (insurers) quite a bit to knock it down, something that was only required by hastily constructed laws enacted during a state of emergency. It would be cheaper to just leave it in its made-safe state (million dollars already spent). The government wants a land bank, I would have thought a historic building would be the perfect gap-filler. People have complained about the wire fences being an eyesore, but are they really so short-sighted that they can't look half a block further, to see the endless acres of gravelly demolition sites, for an actual picture of what it's going to look like in a few weeks time? A tilt-slab supermarket after a few years?

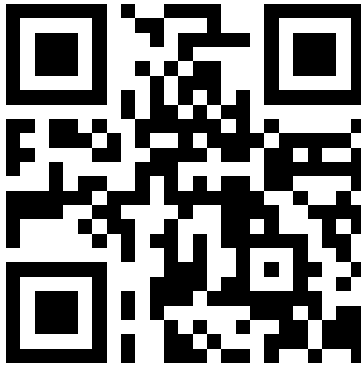
What I think is that a catch-22 has formed, between the leaders who can't really do anything other than what the people want, and the people who are still feeling shellshocked after the quakes and don't know when to get back to normal (because, being NZers, as a rule we need to be told). Meanwhile big money is milking the situation, to the point where these demolitions are arranged overnight - I found out the next day and went to get this footage. Presumably there is the odd hidden agenda, but remember; it's not a conspiracy if no one knows what they're doing and/or they're not trying to hide

it! I learnt many years ago not to underestimate the universal power of stupidity.

Now to upload this and watch all the views pile in (both of them).

Heritage Destruction in Christchurch - Cranmer Courts day 2

video uploaded and text published to YouTube 11/10/12



<http://youtu.be/0cOFCmwAJV4>

Footage taken on:
Friday 5 Oct 2012, day 2 of demolition - Cranmer Court building
MORE INFO BELOW

For day 1 see:
<http://youtu.be/wJuYMwpa9ts>

Once again, I'm not a hardcore heritage supporter. But what's happening here is unbelievable in a way. People (those in power and ordinary citizens) are widely ignoring the facts - this building is being misrepresented as "dangerous", when it's obviously no risk to anyone as it stands. It is however a key heritage site, thus very expensive to do much with in the long term. So they're knocking it down.

If you're not from New Zealand, to answer your question, no, we don't usually allow this sort of thing to happen. It's bizarre. What you're seeing here is a result of a series of large earthquakes, and the resulting political power struggles and insurance woes that have deadlocked the recovery, fuelled by hastily introduced legislation that arguably had a place during the immediate emergency, but seems to now have outlived its usefulness. I don't know for sure, I've got some catching up to do on the politics - I'm more interested in the engineering aspects, and how utterly powerless 21-st century technology is to deal with situations like this.

Heritage Destruction in Christchurch - Cranmer Courts day 3
video uploaded and text published to YouTube 12/10/12



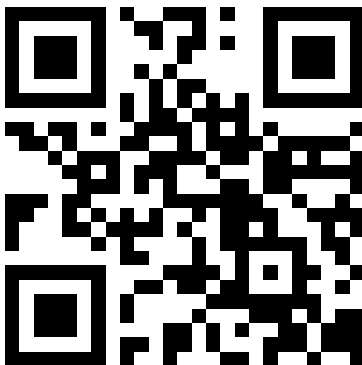
<http://youtu.be/CNiKUvrXyn0>

Footage taken on:
Saturday 6 Oct 2012, day 3? of demolition - Cranmer Court building
Lame I know, but it's the only video I took - MORE INFO BELOW.

I don't know if they actually did anything on Saturday, I just went there as it was getting dark to take some photos in the twilight. It was certainly a bit more demolished, but I wasn't there all Friday to see how far they got by knock off time.

Heritage Destruction in Christchurch - Cranmer Courts day 5

video uploaded and text published to YouTube 15/10/12



<http://youtu.be/4TRgaiypPy4>

Footage taken on:
Monday 8 Oct 2012, day 5 of demolition - Cranmer Court building
MORE INFO BELOW

As far as I know there was no day 4 (Sunday), at least I didn't go, I suppose someone could have taken a sledgehammer to the "period features", stonework around the windows, original foundations, knock a stone or two off the buttresses, break some windows, then tie a towrope to the original reinforcing and see if a car can peel off a whole strip of stones. Perhaps they might like to compare its strength with the new reinforcing. Get a can of Dazzle and tag the road-visible art with all manner of profanity, plus a drawing of a penis is a perennial favourite. Maybe sneak up on the roof with a hammer and see if it's actually possible to smash 2754 slates over an evening, but first take it to the drainpipes to see if they can be bashed in to block them, or at least see if they'll break like brittle iron, in which case smashing in enough will block the drains. Maybe wrench down the flag pole while up there, being sure it twists around and smashes some windows. Now it's late, while getting increasingly drunk, they may well wish to have another crack at ripping out that new reinforcing, by rigging up a system of pulleys to increase the force while the car smokes and slides all the way down Cranmer Square / Montreal St (the wrong way) like a dragster fighting for traction, unzipping a fair amount of steel until the tree it is tied to unfortunately uproots and becomes wedged into the first floor. Triumphant upon return, and with no more tree in the way, they trench the garden with the last ounce of life left in the car's diff, take a dump mostly in one of the non-working toilets (another perennial red-zone favourite), spill beer into the modern but written off furniture, trip and accidentally rip some wiring from the walls, and vomit out a

broken window into the remains of the garden, narrowly missing their boss's rental while its radiator gently hisses and the non-gardening tyre slowly welds itself to the footpath, being a 50:50 mix of Montreal St and rubber.

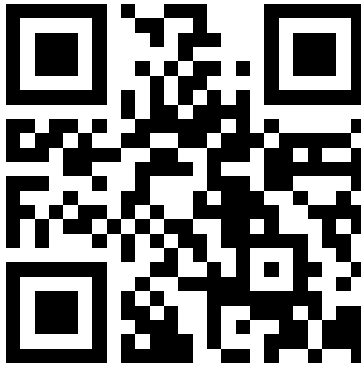
Because come next day it won't make a bit of difference. (Except the tree, I don't think they busted a tree on the Monday, the rest is real.) Who pays for this? The owners, and if they don't then CERA will do it and send them the bill. I wonder how that feels. Probably much like a shit sandwich tastes, if you're allowed to scrape out the shit and just eat the bread.

Anyway. Monday was a pretty bleak day, I got some good photos, but it was bitterly cold and my fingers soon went numb. Mainly interested in engineering shots - pictures of some hybrid stone/block walls, gobs of steel and concrete blocks that were added in the rebuild, and some fairly meaty original steel (it may be before your time, but remember it was a teacher training school built not too long after the Wairarapa earthquake of 1855, and survived the 1888 North Canterbury earthquake "the Normal School in Cranmer Square had cracked ceilings and damaged chimneys").

Thus the movie is quite lame again.

Heritage Destruction in Christchurch - Cranmer Courts day 7

video uploaded and text published to YouTube 16/10/12



<http://youtu.be/vuJY5jaaqKY>

Footage taken on:
Wednesday 10 Oct 2012, day 7 of demolition - Cranmer Court building
MORE INFO BELOW

(Day 6 is skipped because I didn't go. I'm also posting this on day 12, catching up.)

Nice weather and gratuitous violence. Minimal editing, not much point in cutting anything out.

You might notice a pile of steel beside the fire truck. At the risk of sounding political, this is imaginary, because it comes from a dangerously unreinforced masonry building. (If you don't like hallucinating, then (a) lay off the mushies and (b) you definitely don't want to watch my next two videos (days 10 and 11).)

The guy talking to the protestors is the great grandson of Daniel Reese, who, in 1872, was the building contractor for the (then) Normal School (a teacher training school). (Paraphrasing from his letter to the editor on 12 October 2012 Christchurch Press.) We had a good chat, and were in agreement over how unnecessary the demolition is.

And rounding out with a nice volley of machine gun fire, this going on diagonally across the road all the while, with the Army doing some training exercises (excellent use for all these dangerous buildings). No, it didn't give me a fright, I was hiding the camera nonchalantly at waist height, trying not to look too obvious to the approaching army guys in case I wasn't supposed to

be filming such things, waiting to catch another volley. At which point I fumbled to check the camera was pointed in the right direction to catch the hail of virtual bullets. I needn't have worried; there were news crews inside the building and all ran big features that night, my camera was pointing fine, and what you hear was it until I jumped in the car and drove off (being somewhat disconcerted by the potential for virtual bullets to be just like imaginary steel).

Heritage Destruction in Christchurch - Cranmer Courts day 8

video uploaded and text published to YouTube 12/10/12



<http://youtu.be/AenmtDEX010>

Footage taken on:
Thursday 11 Oct 2012, day 8 of demolition - Cranmer Court building
MORE INFO BELOW

I'm posting this out of order because of the events of day - you'll know what I'm talking about if you watched NZ news: Basically today was the big day for heritage advocates, and in a "surprise" outcome the council voted to save the remainder of this class 1 listed building, not a big deal in this city these days, except it is clearly being demolished under a false safety claim (makes a mockery of real safety efforts and really gets my wick up). You don't need to be an engineer to see why, but the general public don't know what to believe. There are a lot of hassles resulting from the quakes, ranging from terrible traffic to dead friends and relatives, this has changed the perspective of everyone here, in ways you wouldn't expect. Nevertheless many people are complaining on social media etc that this building is "unsafe" and must come down - terrified of this unseen danger even from 15km away, willing to believe in it at any cost, and oblivious to how ridiculous it actually is (or is it? hard to know when you've been in the middle of it, simple things like watching something fall to the ground in a zigzag pattern really test your understanding of the world).

Sorry about the sound quality, the wind in the microphones is really annoying (I really need to get some "micromuffs", might also help stop me sticking my fingers over the microphone holes). Also the really terrible camerawork, but you get what you pay for - it's not called amateur video for nothing!

There are also "gaps in the story" because I was using the camera to take photos - the main goal being to document this now even more historic building. I just happened to stumble into a bit of a 'civic altercation'. (The whole video has been edited obviously, but I have tried to stay reasonably impartial.)

I mean really, this is a major NZ city population 400000 (before the quakes, dropped a bit since). If you are working on the city's key heritage, and a city councillor comes up to you after a major meeting with national news coverage, and she questions what you're doing, and you realise a mistake has been made - you don't say ring some dude at CERA! And that's not the contractor's fault - it just shows who's calling the shots. Now, people may whinge about the Council spending ratepayers' money on "saving" the building, but, people of Christchurch, ask yourself this: what's the point of paying your rates to the CCC if CERA are the ones who are spending it? CERA are fining the owners of the property \$10k(+GST?) per day if they pause demolition, to mitigate a "danger" which can't be credibly demonstrated. CERA are forcing the owners / insurers to spend money on an expensive and unnecessary demolition, while thousands of people remain homeless around the city. CERA themselves have no real control because it's all legislated. What a mess.

THIS is what a dictatorship looks like. I finally get that after watching my own video, which just finished compressing.

To the contractors' credit the discussion did seem to slow them down, at the time I thought this had stopped them for the day or maybe longer, and that they were just cleaning up the rubble afterwards with diggers, but in hindsight it's probably what they do anyway (along with trying to get the historic door grille out apparently). We'll see, it did seem to hit home rather hard from my vantage point (remember I saw a lot more than I filmed or can include here - there were a lot of people on phones afterwards, including me).

I had heard (this part is hearsay) that after the vote, someone from CERA told someone on the crew to keep going, and from the pace they were going today (see my day 2 video - when I got the sense the opposite sentiment was true) and obvious confusion of the crew, I wouldn't be surprised if that is true.

Anyway, more than enough for one day.

Heritage Destruction in Christchurch - Cranmer Courts day 9

video uploaded and text published to YouTube 15/10/12



<http://youtu.be/wTlu6GhpXKM>

Footage taken on:
Friday 12 Oct 2012, day 9 of demolition - Cranmer Court building
MORE INFO BELOW

Continued from day 8:
<http://youtu.be/AenmtDEX010>

No, as I suspected, they had no intention of stopping. Going at it hammer and tongs (or big orange donger!). The bad news from this building's point of view, is that after all the TV coverage of Council voting to halt demolition, people automatically just assume it was. No it wasn't. Refer to the "hearsay" I mentioned last video, the contractors have had the wind put up them by someone (possibly themselves).

There is an air of anger mounting in the public (eg car tooters) as more of the public wake up to what's "probably" going on, or more likely the news coverage the day before - anarchy in the Council Chambers. These are prominent people like the Wizard and Chair Director of the Arts & Heritage Trust, not some random "bunch of hippies" - although some chaining of oneself to a heritage building wouldn't go amiss at the moment (I was considering a high-rise because without them the Christchurch skyline looks a bit third-world - but I don't like heights, and dangling 25 stories up with the possibility of more quakes is a bit much). Yes the car horns are irritating, that's the point of protesting. I went quite late in the day not long before the contractors knocked off, so it got quiet fairly soon.

I thought I'd include the whole walk-round scene to give an impression of the state of the remainder of the building, the foundations, the gardens etc. And some from the back. Owners spent a million dollars making it safe and watertight, this is slated to get torn down. Apparently no one paid them for those heritage protection efforts, and they can't expect to recover the costs now. In fact they're forced to pay for a demolition and accept hefty delay penalties, in the name of safety laws which I expect will come to light as being unjustified and/or fraudulent (but no one ever questions the validity of safety efforts - it's the great new taboo). These temporary laws (granting of extraordinary executive powers, not the building codes) will need to be repealed at some point, I wonder what sort of mess that is going to leave. While NZ remains a democracy long-term and deception (well-meaning or not) at this level, if exposed, will lead to a change of government, in the short term this is a blatant dictatorship. Basically Wellington (the capital of NZ, and biggest earthquake worry of the country) seems to be playing an experiment on Christchurch, out of fear / sympathy / cruelty / confusion / relief. They seem to have an excellent propaganda machine churning away though I haven't got the foggiest how it works. They also have a fair point about safety and the rebuild, but ultimately they aren't HERE (except for a couple of locals under remote control, and my good MP the right honourable ex-woodwork teacher).

Anyway, enough politics (again). I only went down last Thursday to get some photos (after the overnight demolition order), but got enough video to be worthwhile so put it on YouTube (rather than trying the news networks). Of course I couldn't resist going back for half an hour or two most days since then. But after Friday I thought I'm generally over helping save a building which is going to be knocked down anyway (or not...). (Yet I went back over the weekend.)

Some notes:

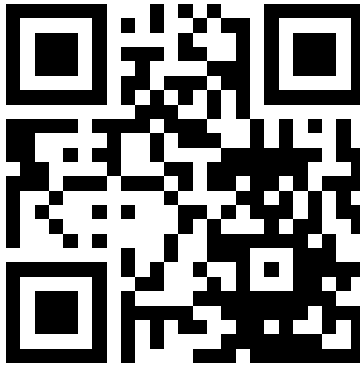
- I hurriedly taped some felt over the mics so the wind noise is subdued (not a proper "deadcat", so you still get the well let's say "aura" of an amateur shot)
- I took a small tripod attachment to work as a steadicam to help with camera shake and that IS system battling my skilful pans. Still getting used to that...
- Yes I was on my bike today, no you can't drive over Cranmer Square (but the news crews did), as a sense of normalcy returns to the city you probably wouldn't any more.
- I'd better say (before the cops try to shut the road down) that no, the scene with the truck isn't as dangerous as it looks. He wasn't trying to run us down (might have crossed his mind...), just had to get into his lane, and the camera makes it look closer / faster than it really was. Funny thing is, the argument was about whether we had to keep behind the road cones. I

still had my bike helmet on, engineer with a hardhat, I can go wherever I bloody well want... All good fun. We had a good chat later and like pretty much everyone I met, the security guards are all sad to see the building going - contractors too apparently, but it looks like it has tested their patience for the last time.

- Same goes for my position 'under' the demolition. There's actually quite a distance, as you can see in some of the end-on shots. I'm not unaware of the hazards of falling masonry.
- I don't think the contractor was trying to hose me (well maybe a bit). I don't know if I could resist that temptation. Anyway it doesn't matter, that part of the ground was already wet, so I had the sense to put a plastic bag over the camera.

Heritage Destruction in Christchurch - Cranmer Courts day 10

video uploaded and text published to YouTube 17/10/12



http://youtu.be/_239CSbt5xc

Footage taken on:
Saturday 13 Oct 2012, day 10 of demolition - Cranmer Court building
SMOKING GUN BELOW

Continued from day 9:
<http://youtu.be/wTlu6GhpXKM>

While I had decided enough is enough, I went for a quick drive to see if they did more on Saturday (otherwise how would I know). They sure had - exposing something very interesting.

But first, it was just as cold and even rainier than day 5, viciously windy at times which made for difficult night photography. But I had a jacket, the same raincoat for my camera (see rather disturbing shot at the end), and fossicked around in the car for a lens rain shield (blue chopping mat, which you'll see blowing into many of the shots). That caused a discussion with another security guard (thinking I was putting a protest sign on the fence), couldn't post that as it would be one long continuous beep on daytime TV (but once the initial standoff was over we had a good chat about the building as usual). It was horrible weather so I stayed a while to get some nice photos as it got dark, and some video for you my dear viewers (both of you).

Now, since swearing off political stuff (yet I go back there...), returning to the above interesting thing. The smoking gun.

While it's not so visible in the video (photos were better), you can see the block wall at the 'new' end of the building. This is called a shear wall, it stops

the front and back walls falling off (or over). This is the mother of all shear walls, in reinforced concrete block. Not a single crack visible, and after an earthquake it would be quite alright if it was "all cracked to hell", as long as it didn't come apart or buckle out of plane too much. For a building which has experienced 0.5g PGA in an earthquake this could well be expected. I also noted the front (road-facing) wall is (or was) reinforced with a layer of concrete block most of the way along from what I could see (I couldn't get a good angle to see exactly how it was attached or the reinforcing - more is not always better in these situations anyway). The non-road end of many (all?) of the shear walls continued in a line (following the roof) down to the ground. Also notice the way the first floor joins to the wall is still perfectly intact except where it has been snapped off by the diggers (or whatever the bitey machine is called, technically not a "shear"), that would have been cantilevered out much further during demolition and prone to busting off if it was anywhere near compromised. The ring foundation around the building looks in pretty much pristine condition apart from the odd crack (the house I'm in at the moment has more cracks in its ring foundation). The wooden roof structure also looked very strong, presumably an original seismic design feature. The slates feel surprisingly dense to hold but at only 4.5mm thick are quite light. This wall was on display for 3 days so I wondered who was showing it off.

Now not all the shear walls were in solid block - some were a hybrid of original stone joined to block up either side. And you can't take one (or 4) quakes and extrapolate them out to what would happen in every possible earthquake of the prescribed size (they shake in different directions, at different frequencies, and for different lengths of time - but as we well know you can't prescribe a size and expect earthquakes to follow the rules, so it's all a guessing game anyway). There's the inconvenient observation that after February (Feb 22 2011 for non-Christchurchers), standing buildings suffered much less damage from the two roughly equal sized June and December aftershocks. And I simply haven't been in this building (yet) to see what's going on. Of course some bits of stone facade fell off, including some of the gables which (contrary to rumours) definitely had earthquake strengthening ties / anchor plates on them (these have mostly been removed in the make-safe, but I have the photos pre and post Feb).

I'm not a registered structural engineer (which is why I can say these things without losing my job), but I am an engineer, and I have done more coursework in the uni's Civil Eng wing and lab than the average random person, so there's more than a random chance I'm right. If I was the building owner I'd be ropable, and I can understand why the heritage people are exploding with frustration. Even the insurance companies. And worst of all the people who are going to die because of this, because THIS is what causes complacency in industry. Some replacement buildings will be weaker and untested, and in time complacency will take hold in the wake of all this fake

safety, ignorance, and greedy box-ticking. While it's not my field, it all points that way, I've seen it before, and assuming I can still get a job after I've said this (hasn't stopped me before!), I'll see it again.

That's not being political, it's just verifiable fact, an inevitable and logical conclusion when rebuilding a new city on a foundation of fear and greed (ok that's a bit political).

Heritage Destruction in Christchurch - Cranmer Courts day 11
video uploaded and text published to YouTube 17/10/12



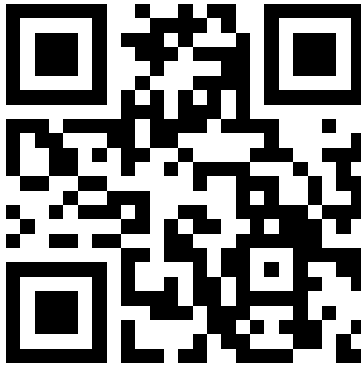
<http://youtu.be/eaNqC3A9oRs>

Footage taken on:
Sunday 14 Oct 2012, day 11 of demolition - Cranmer Court building
GUN STILL SMOKING BELOW

Continued from Day 10:
http://youtu.be/_239CSbt5xc

No demolition, being Sunday. However it was a nice day for a drive, and much better conditions than the night before for filming the shear wall. Here you go.

Heritage Destruction in Christchurch - Cranmer Courts day 12
video uploaded and text published to YouTube 18/10/12



<http://youtu.be/0aUmoG8cYH0>

Footage taken on:

Monday 15 Oct 2012, day 12 of demolition - Cranmer Court building
SMALL WISPS OF SMOKE STILL EMITTING FROM GUN BELOW

Continued from Day 11:

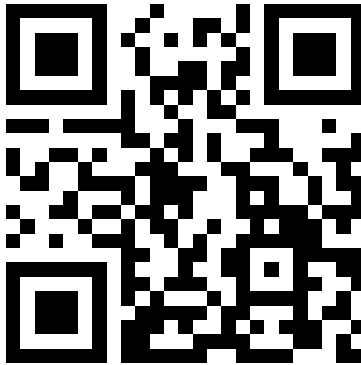
<http://youtu.be/eaNqC3A9oRs>

Nipped down at the end of Monday to check on "progress", talked to a couple of interesting characters for quite a while since there wasn't much to film. Grabbed some shots in the end. Was expecting to see the wall down, surprised they hadn't touched it, just cleaning up the site and foundations. (I knew they had no intention of saving the wall, because of the way the floor diaphragm had been broken off of it - you'd cut it off with a concrete saw about 500mm out to leave something for whoever's capping the end of the building to play with. Of course OSH would bitch and moan that someone extremely tall bouncing on a pogo stick might scone themselves, oblivious to the fact that it's higher than a ceiling...).

Site looking a bit tidier. They could almost open the residents' gate at the back and start diverting traffic through there to help get people used to the new road layout. (BTW the units at the back are still occupied, only the heritage building is cordoned off.)

Also, it should be obvious, but I have left comments open on all these videos so people can challenge me on the engineering details, or accuse me of adding car horn noises to the protest footage, or whatever. I will take your silence as quiet agreement.

Heritage Destruction in Christchurch - Cranmer Courts day 13 a video uploaded and text published to YouTube 19/10/12



<http://youtu.be/6X1ZKUjTxHA>

Footage taken on:

Tuesday 16 Oct 2012, day 13 of demolition - Cranmer Court building
MORE INFO BELOW

Continued from Day 12:

<http://youtu.be/0aUmoG8cYH0>

Tuesday in 2 parts (pushing Avidemux2 to its editing limits).

Now this would be surreal if it wasn't so normal for us in Christchurch. Motorists blindly driving into a pea-souper of dust, with building materials raining down - paradoxically we've lost all fear, yet cling to the promise of safety, not all that worried because we know it's a bit meaningless and what will be will be. I'm nearly running into traffic, and prepared to close a main road without any authority. I feel adrenalin pump, but it has no effect any more, I go from that to holding a steady shot as if nothing happened, knowing I can easily outrun a piece of roofing iron if I have to, rather than just wondering. Police and ambulances everywhere, but with a thousand times more to do than what's happening here. And The Wizard was there, in the thick of it, I was helping take photos for people. Ramp this up by a factor or 10 or 100 and that's what it was like for the first year or so after the Feb earthquake.

People sometimes treat us like walking dead, perhaps this is why. It was visible on the TV coverage of the February quake (the little of it that I've seen), people jumping in and helping if they could, otherwise a bit "ho hum" about it all, as if they'd been through it thousands of times in their minds

already. Having already gone through 4000 aftershocks it wasn't as much of a surprise as it should have been. Buildings collapsing and injuring and killing people was though, that part didn't really compute. Things are slowly getting back to normal public-psyche wise, but this is just under the surface, whatever it means.

Anyway I think I've typed myself into a dead end. But I'd better explain some things in the video before someone gets arrested:

I'm not going to blame the guys doing the demolition. They had adequately warned me not to stand where the roofing iron could come down (which I heeded). The foreman? was keeping a very close eye on what was going on (as was I of course, being within the flight path of a piece of roofing iron).

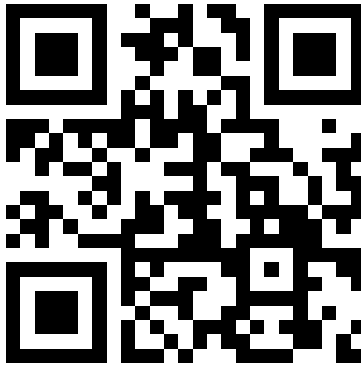
I didn't quite catch what the guy was saying other than "iron" - I was thinking a piece of angle iron or something. That's why I made a point of moving right next to the cars, I was not far off running into their path and forcing them to stop, but it was too late for my arrest to be on the evening news, and I took some time to think through the risk to motorists and decided to let it go. I might be able to dodge an iron skewer, but someone in a car is a sitting duck. The fact it was only a piece of roofing iron wasn't so bad (but not by much). The main thing I was watching for was anything which might fall and slide or bounce into traffic (in an earthquake the roof structure should remain in one piece, this was actively being pulled apart, and unknown surprises were coming out of it). A couple of steps to the left and I'd stop traffic instantly, run backwards I'd be clear, so it was a handy place to be. Having just pulled the engineer card, I felt somewhat duty bound to act if there was any significant danger, I was in the process of freeing my camera hand to pick up road cones and that sign that was in front of me to close the road (then ask the contractors to stop until it was sorted out or I was arrested, because it's a road used by the emergency services). Fortunately the contractors had it under control (barely) and stopped 2 seconds earlier.

I blame the obvious rush the contractors are under, from whoever put the wind up them to the point that they have to push things to the very limit of what is reasonable. If things weren't so tense, they could have taken a break for a couple of hours and not done this during the beginning of rush hour. They are another pawn in this game that's being played with the city, and it's happening all over it. Although I've bagged OSH before, I would have to agree with their current fashion of "blame the system not the worker" on this one. I was only there for a couple of hours, and have laid low since, so who knows what else is going on.

Remember, the whole point of this demolition is supposedly because this building is dangerous. Demolition was slated to take 9 weeks, so the PTB can't plead short exposure. It's ridiculous what we're supposed to swallow.

To be continued (day 13 b).

Heritage Destruction in Christchurch - Cranmer Courts day 13 b
video uploaded and text published to YouTube 20/10/12



<http://youtu.be/YcJrw4JAoBU>

Footage taken on:
Tuesday 16 Oct 2012, day 13 of demolition - Cranmer Court building
MORE INFO BELOW

Continued from Day 13a:
<http://youtu.be/6X1ZKUjTxHA>

This footage is seconds after the above. Avidemux2 was having problem with the "delogo" filter used to block the number plate out of a car on the property (probably a resident's so I thought it only fair, it's not some sort of conspiracy). There's also a bit of the site immediately behind Cranmer Courts, where a basement foundation is being built (which has relevance in a later video).

More on the contractors: They have been quite professional in getting this building converted into hardfill and steel, and careful enough not to kill anyone. They are working within metres of a main road, without any real authority to prevent people walking right up to the fence, presumably because CERA can't afford the embarrassment* of closing a main road. I heard they have to hire the car parks from the Council to put road cones in, but there aren't any parks in the section they're now working in. In the CBD red zone, contractors can work much more freely. But make no mistake, when people say "don't shoot the messenger", that's wrong - the contractors come with a job to do, not a message to deliver. That's a big distinction. Just following orders? Realise they chose to do this suck job, and to be paid handsomely for it. There are plenty of other jobs in the city. They'd have to expect the type of

attention they're getting from the protestors (and tooting public and news crews and any idiot with a camera).

* Christchurch is all about social engineering. This was evident in the way "they" hid the risk of the quake which hit in February: GNS were telling us to expect a 6 from the beginning, they were also allowed to tell us aftershocks had started occurring under the city, but not allowed to warn of the consequences of a 6+ under the city. Many people who saw the effects of the 2010 Boxing Day 4.9 put two and two together (realising that's more than 10 times as big) so it's not as if we were being misled. But the point is someone made that decision, it didn't happen by accident, "social engineering" was admitted at the time, and was all over the news but it's been buried pretty well now. (No, I'm not suggesting they caused the earthquake before the conspiracy theorists get into this.) So given the clear risk, where was the "destroy everything leave no stone unturned" attitude back then when it would have actually helped? They're making up for it now that it's mostly too late. The response sounds good, but it doesn't actually make sense, and is creating what is basically a massive fraud.

About CERA: I don't believe CERA is all bad (even though I keep showing that sign). They have a stupendous amount to do, and it's not work that's been done before. But make no mistake, they are a headless monster. I don't want to bag Roger Sutton because (a) he's an engineer and if he goes down in the ball of flame that any sensible person taking on that job would expect, you won't believe the mess we will almost certainly be in, and (b) he is more of the spinal column than the head. When he said he's powerless to do whatever, I believe it. There is no head; CERA is there to inflict the law, which it has no direct control over, and can't go soft or bend its intention if they wish to be seen as effective. The Minister has more control, including the power to write laws on a whim, but bound by longer term checks and balances. There are yearly technical reviews, and input from various panels of people who are either deliberately disconnected from reality, or the community forum of ~34 chosen by the Minister himself, who meet regularly to advise on important but menial things like "yes the 100 day plan looks good, when can we lift the embargo?". This is a lot of paper, butt kissing, and rule following, with self-congratulatory letters flying between the players. Ultimately the direction of the CER Act is set as intended and shall not be changed substantially, therefore it continues to be applied with absolute authority, and the real questions don't need to (and can't) be asked until after its complete failure. In this way, I see CERA as a mandated smokescreen between government policy, and the people. It's not broken, it's working perfectly, like a well oiled (smoke) machine - which has upsides and downsides (the main downside being "absolute power corrupts absolutely").

Once again, check out the steel from this uninhabited, supposedly dangerous "unreinforced masonry" heritage building. While not an engineering report, it provides a plainly visible demonstration of the contradiction between what is real and what the government would have us believe.

Heritage Destruction in Christchurch - Cranmer Courts day 14
video uploaded and text published to YouTube 22/10/12



<http://youtu.be/VXQmT1cTJM4>

Footage taken on:
Wednesday 16 Oct 2012, day 14 of demolition - Cranmer Court building
MORE INFO BELOW

Continued from Day 13b:
<http://youtu.be/YcJrw4JaoBU>

Just went for a drive to check out the other demolition sites in the city (railway station, PWC tower, Farmers carpark, Cathedral), and called in here for a few minutes on the way back, then the Arts Centre "rebuild".

What a mess with the south wing and octagon (tower) mostly gone. At least it proves that this has the original bones of a genuine historic building, not just a facade. Not in good shape (partially collapsed 4 Sept 2010), but this area could have been closed off until repaired and was low enough to not be a risk to passers by (part of the make-safe).

What struck me was how the building has lost its whole frontage from Cranmer Square (there's probably a proper word like "aspect"). Being an engineer, aesthetics don't always mean much to me, but sighting the site today I finally get it. As a neighbour to the building said, it has lost its "dominance". It was a big building, fronting half a city block, and gave historicalistic (probably not a proper word) "presence" to Cranmer Square. Feels like the soul has been ripped out of the place. Take a castle off the grounds and you're left with a paddock sort of thing. The half of the building that remains, once the tower end is demolished (tomorrow) (turns out it was -

I'm posting this a few days late), will remain big and impressive from Manchester St, but has certainly lost its dominance over Cranmer Square.

Thus disconnecting the square from the Arts Precinct. This leaves the gate wide open for it to become "Cranmer Lane" - after chopping down some trees at either end, paving the middle in a 4 lane highway, greening the roads on the sides, and knocking down a row of buildings on either side to "give something back to the people". This adds the final side to the green frame around the CBD (conspicuously missing from the plan). There's plenty of room for a 4 lane road with Cranmer Courts and the Peterborough Centre gone, a 3D flyover reveals 4 lanes all the way from Moorhouse to Bealey Ave if you get rid of all the carparks except one (a big one: the CBD). Other options include Cranmer Underpass (2 lanes under 2 lanes round), Cranmer roundabout, and a funny option with a diagonal street cutting through Cranmer Square then ploughing through the Peterborough Centre.

Yes, I'm just stirring. To debunk my own conspiracy theory: You can get 4 lanes past Cranmer Courts and the Peterborough Centre as they stand, with reduced traffic volumes in the CBD it only needs 2 lanes for the medium term (which suits work on the buildings). The west side of the green frame looks distorted because it follows the river for obvious reasons. Cutting up Cranmer Square would mess up the symmetry with Latimer Square, which is untouched. What they're actually planning to do with the roading changes should be plainly obvious, suggested to me a couple of days earlier (just open Google Maps and have a look). I did wonder if it was clever to suggest Cranmer Lane (has a ring to it, doesn't it?), but I assume it has already been given serious thought and rejected (over and over again). Everyone I've mentioned it to has said "they'll never do that". I'm just not so sure myself - I would (I'd do the underpass, with phone-box sized skylights to mirror the buildings at either end of Cranmer Square, underground parking, and shops - electric car lanes only). Do you know who is in control? If you can't answer that, you can't be certain of anything.

More actual details:

That set up in Cranmer Square is the Whitebait Festival.

Sorry about the creepy discontinuous edits, it really is bad luck especially if you're ornithophobic. Looks like the birds are just as disturbed as you now their home is halved. Not cultured enough to have ever seen the film.

Heritage Destruction in Christchurch - Cranmer Courts day 15

video uploaded and text published to YouTube 23/10/12



<http://youtu.be/HwpMe6m8UEs>

Footage taken on:
Thursday 18 Oct 2012, day 15 of demolition - Cranmer Court building
MORE INFO BELOW

Continued from Day 14:
<http://youtu.be/VXQmTlcTJM4>

Just a quick update after another look around the city (editing these videos and prattling on in these descriptions takes most of the time).

First showing the emergency services ripping by, to illustrate my previous points about them having better things to do, etc, and why demolishing the remaining wing could be a nightmare. (Nothing to do with earthquakes of course, this is just the route north.)

Then what's (not) left of the octagon (the original stone parts visible in my last update). The original stone end wall is part of that, reinforced with original steel bands. Even I wouldn't stand under this wall with the ground in the condition it is (to me the two most important things in a quake are being able to see, and being able to run - none of this stop drop and roll nonsense - who in Chch actually curls up in a ball and makes themselves a target?). The wall would probably just crumble even in a big earthquake, but one big stone would be enough. (Then again as a kid I'd climb up something like this without a second thought after having some friends poke it with a log, pieces would come crashing down but that would be part of the excitement and no one would die or even hurt themselves that badly - not suggesting we all start doing this, but what's happened? Are we really any safer?)

The crying shame (apart from the heritage and the waste), is that no one appears to be running experiments on damaged structures. When the building is gone, this knowledge will be lost, and the idiots will have won. So much could be learnt about other local buildings by testing some strengthening ideas, or shaking it until it collapses to see what happens, or testing safety shields, or countless other things I won't go into here. But the building is dangerous and must come down urgently - their grip on the city has thrown reasoned safety out the window.

Anyway, obviously the remaining building is now a nice package for development, but I fear CERA will continue to facilitate offers in its usual way (arms wide apart, gun in each hand, held to the foreheads of buyer and seller). Refuse overseas income, demolish the asset, and bill the owner. Way to go NZ, way to go.

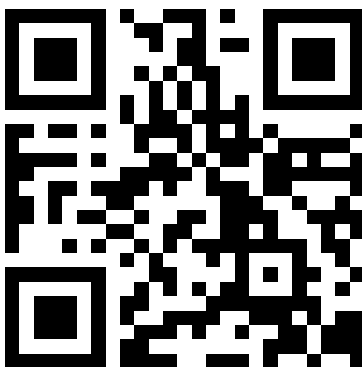
The last clip I've included is of Gloucester St a bit later on, road open again after making good progress on the Farmers carpark. Though the shot is a bit bright, this was a shocking sight to come across. I called it "dripping death", probably because it reminds me of recurring nightmares I used to have as a kid, and the sheer all-surrounding scale of it. The reality is completely benign. This is a case where demolition and rebuild is almost elegant in its simplicity and economy: The carpark is made of concrete and steel, which get munched up and separated into piles during the demolition (like Cranmer Court). Concrete goes off to the 'regrind' plant (to borrow a term from the plastics industry) or can even be processed and stored on-site (or next to it, the CBD isn't short on space). This produces known-strength aggregate, since it all comes from the same building, and has no problems with contaminants like ground up spent nuclear fuel rods or radioisotope sources (happens more often than you'd think, usually ends up in steel). This is much more economic in terms of dollars and carbon. The steel gets balled up and shoved into skips (see a previous video) then goes off to Pacific Steel to get recycled into fresh reinforcing. Slag from the process can go into the concrete to make it more ductile, which is something we want here. So depending on the timeframe, you might actually end up with the same building, built from the original materials. They can't do that for the heritage buildings. (Nor for the Farmers carpark, since they're making a profit for the investors by taking the insurance and selling the land for the new convention centre.)

Elegance doesn't make something right though. If it's a 20 storey high-rise full of peoples' irreplaceable data and difficult to replace equipment that gets munched up into a ball (despite later craning in diggers to work all the floors), then I find it offensive that the authorities would set out to ruin peoples' lives like that, when it is patently unnecessary.

Once again, although I can't help using the shots, I don't believe CERA is all bad - probably great people, but an impossibly draconian "authority".
(Although in the context of this false demolition, of course CERA is extremely bad.)

Heritage Destruction in Christchurch - Cranmer Courts day 17

video uploaded and text published to YouTube 26/10/12



<http://youtu.be/0TIg97n77rQ>

Footage taken on:
Saturday 20 Oct 2012, day 17 of demolition - Cranmer Court building
MORE INFO BELOW

Continued from Day 15:
<http://youtu.be/VXQmTlcTJM4>

No work on Friday (day 16) except clearing the site and early knock-off for the long weekend apparently, so I was surprised to see the whole wing still standing late Saturday. Whitebait Festival in full swing. I took more footage to add to the history pile, most of it not included here.

So instead here's some of the "LUXCITY" festival later that night, I didn't even know it was on until at a BBQ that evening. We got there late, without any idea of the earlier overcrowding (the expected 2000 turned to 12000).

Starts from the carpark (crater?) created by the Radio Network building implosion (one of my earlier videos). I tried the fire thing but wasn't as good as this guy! Shouts out to coaldafyr*ta if I got that name right. Then along Gloucester St, taking in all the new sights and experiences brought to us by architecture and design students from around the country.

Yes, it's the same street and "dripping death" scene in the last video. Looked horrifyingly evil by day - not so bad at night. That's yet another example of things being "upside down" in Christchurch. Actually out-of-towners would do very well to note this simple fact - things are very often not what you would expect. See those cracks on the wall of the first high-rise? They're repairs,

not cracks. See that homeless looking bum shuffling along? (no one in particular, just making a point.) He probably owns that building and 5 others down the street. The happy laughing couple? They've got no home to go back to, and this is the first real break they've had in ages. The person with a troubled frown? They've just moved back into their upmarket house after it was fixed (barely adequately), and are trying to avoid thinking about the happy couple's predicament, while wondering where they recognise the homeless bum from. So beware assumptions. (Except architecture students still look like architecture students.)

Anyway, it was one of those experiences that makes you think you've been transported to a different world and a new time (reminded me of orientation at uni many years ago), especially considering where you are. (Also LEDs do maketh the 21st century.) So more shouts to the Festa crew and students who brought this to us, strange and fleeting as it was. Gazillions of insurance dollars flowing in will rebuild the city, so don't worry about that (it's beyond our control anyway). But I think these things (LUXCITY, planting flowerbeds, the container mall) are creating a new personality for it, right now. Just remember - you can't have new without old - it's meaningless. (Just like you can't have safety without danger.) My point there would be to not deny the past, or the earthquakes, because both these things are responsible for how we got here. (By the way, the LED was discovered in 1907, by someone born 5 years after the Normal School (Cranmer Court) was completed.)

Some people were saying it should be every night. I also want to mention how people were unceremoniously shooed away by an anonymous security force at the end (mostly not shown). Understandable - but not really - plenty of cops around and no angst, nobody vomiting through the fences into the red zone that I saw. There wasn't a police state mentality here before the earthquakes, and certainly not in the aftermath (those opposites again). It's not the Police, but some faceless authority. Anyway if you're that worried about safety, address it properly in advance, rather than relying on dubious crowd control techniques which will eventually backfire. No biggie, they're not shooting rubber bullets yet, just something I can see bubbling to the surface. Not to rain on the parade of an excellent experience, it's just that this is a protest-related video, not a feel-good story.

While I'm on it, Google "disaster mythology". First things I assumed in the Sept quake (other than walls must have collapsed) were "turn off the power, and prepare for lawlessness and rioting". Neither were necessary. Consider this; if you go camping, and everyone gets rained in - do you kill your neighbours and eat their food? No, it just doesn't work this way. We are born to be resourceful, and instinctively form societies. When the organised rules fall apart, things get better not worse, because everyone knows what is right, and people actually help each other (again, those opposites). A few dumb

crims will choose to do what is wrong, but they don't last long in an environment of hypervigilance.

The problem comes when people are persecuted by people, not nature. It has been happening since the first quake, and is by far the biggest problem for the majority of residents. I think the PTB are aware of the potential for this to turn bad, and trying to stop it, by doing the exact opposite of what is needed. And feel-good stories (like this festival) won't cover that up forever.

Heritage Destruction in Christchurch - Cranmer Courts day 19

video uploaded and text published to YouTube 28/10/12



<http://youtu.be/pt35x-6LIFE>

Footage taken on:
Monday 21 Oct 2012, day 19 of demolition - Cranmer Court building
MORE INFO BELOW

Continued from Day 17 (no day 18):
<http://youtu.be/0TIg97n77rQ>

Not expecting any work being a long weekend. Raining and horribly cold again (yes this is supposed to be summer).

I thought I'd just show one last look while it's still there, and a bit more of the engineering details including the million dollar make-safe from the other end of the building. A shot to illustrate "one big stone would be enough" (see day 15), no it didn't fall horizontally, looks like one used to hold the fences down. I was a bit pessimistic about how strong that wall actually is. It may look like something children shouldn't climb up, but it's pretty obvious it was never going to fall down on its own (after seeing it down). Too thick, and too much weight on it at the bottom for that to ever happen. Still, a bit crumbly at the top.

I also realised something over the weekend, which is still unfolding as I look at the ongoing demolition. All this talk of shear walls and stuff, is probably overthinking it. For the most part, the walls inside seem straight, nothing "out of plane" that I saw, most areas not even cracked which is pretty amazing for a stone (or whatever it is) building having gone through the enormous quakes it did. Limited areas of obvious damage from things falling, some bowed floors. No cracks in the blocks (from a distance what looks like cracks is just

dirt catching on the mortar - let's just say I had a really good zoom lens). Concrete beams could do with a look at, but probably need nothing done. But add that up, and a re-gib / re-plaster / re-paint for a complex the size of half a block, and there's at least a million dollars just there (and you saw how little was done for the million buck make-safe). After re-piling the ground floors, and strengthening the original stonework and facade (which need not be a big deal - certainly not a sizeable fraction of a billion dollars as was estimated - come on people have you lost all reason!), I can unfortunately see the "uneconomic to repair" argument. Erase the heritage status, and this becomes a simple "repair or rebuild" insurance job. And there's your answer.

My good MP said: "Old stuff, if it's got any damage at all, needs to be got down and got out, because it's dangerous and we don't need it.", after saying "...absolutely strong position is that the old dungas, no matter what their connection, are going under the hammer." To be fair it was in connection with a heritage building killing workers (I for one shared the same shock and resignation) - but conveniently ignoring the fact that the modern buildings killed vastly more people. Like most people in Christchurch I had heard of his comments, but have only just researched the details - we had too much to do at the time and probably no power and a broken TV (can't find the date).

Sounds sensible, but it's not real. An extensively damaged lime mortar unreinforced masonry church killed 3 people trying to rescue an organ, in a horrible, total collapse, which has a thicker plot than most people assume. Modern buildings built to squeak past the building codes collapse and kill by far the most people (mainly CTV, 1987, 115 deaths). An old relatively very heavily reinforced building is left standing strong, some units only yellow stickered, weathers two more devastating-size quakes than these collapsed buildings, of course safe as houses while unoccupied - and it's the one that goes under the hammer (Cranmer Courts).

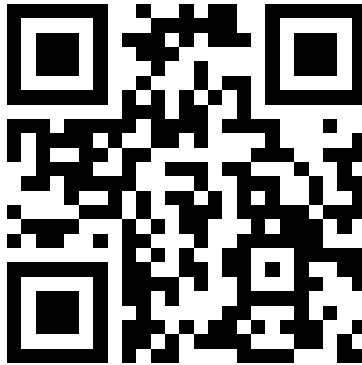
It's very important people understand the reality, because it is quite different from the "they're dangerous, knock em down" rhetoric. (Only allowed 1000 words here, but I do intend to follow all this up with the "thicker plot".)

So somewhere between Gerry's outburst, and me wanting to climb up that wall as a kid, lies a safe and practical reality - not the extremes proposed by him or me. What happened to assessing each building on its merits? Once again, realise the "dungas" statement is illogical, in fact quite the opposite of what the evidence suggests. Why are these "dungas" (Cranmer Court, Cathedrals, Arts Centre, Museum, Octagon Restaurant) still standing well after some modern buildings suffered immediate total collapse killing over a hundred people in one case?

Is a headlong rush to destroy these, and keep throwing increasingly newer building codes at the problem really the way to go? Experts are beginning to question it - and that is not accounting for the heritage argument at all.

Anyway, be absolutely certain of one thing: This building (Cranmer Court) is not even remotely near "collapse". I'd consider living in the yellow stickered one (if it weren't being demolished as I write this a few days later). Comments are open as usual if you disagree.

Heritage Destruction in Christchurch - Cranmer Courts day 20
video uploaded and text published to YouTube 29/10/12



<http://youtu.be/Jd8dznIX8vU>

Footage taken on:
Wednesday 23 Oct 2012, day 20 of demolition - Cranmer Court building
MORE INFO BELOW

Continued from Day 19:
<http://youtu.be/pt35x-6LIFE>

The idiots have won.

The contractors have ripped into the last remaining wing of the building.
(They're not who I'm calling idiots.)

I went late just to film a little bit of destruction then record details of the site, but they kept going late. Apart from one protestor for a while and the odd tourist, no one else was there. Endless streams of traffic, vaguely interested at times, the odd toot, but just on their way home, in a presumably propaganda programmed daze.

So I gave up worrying about saving the rest of the building, and filmed what I could in the hope it will be of some scientific value at some stage. Maybe in 146 years, after the next really big quake, when they're trying to work out how to get the steel out of the Arts Centre to replace it with some non crystalline carbon boron matrix film, and want to recognate (or "autorec" for the archaic term) the repair stones against my ancient vid to see how far they fell.

More seriously, it's to help out a bit with the "crying shame" mentioned in my day 15 description, by recording some insights into how the building and its

materials behave in the face of smashing, pushing, punching, pulling, tumbling and dropping. Maybe useful to calibrate some models some day. It at least answers some of my own questions.

The main demolition sequence really does get quite destructive. You can also watch how the pros do a tool change. It includes the destruction of an entire floor in basically unedited form, except for a few bits where I found myself drifting off during editing, so saved you, my dear viewer(s?), the inconvenience of nodding off at work by cutting those out. So it is quite long. Also starting to look like a great big Jurgens ad.

Clearly, this building is not "weak":

- As I suspected (and wrote, but may have deleted it), that floor did stand up on its own without the end wall (I assumed the floor would be down by the time I got there, so was pleased to see to see it floating there). Notice the immense destructive forces needed to get it down, and strength of the beam in the middle. This is similar to the smashing required to get modern skyscrapers to come apart.
- Perhaps the fact that it was a school, with construction started only 18 years after the most powerful earthquake ever recorded in New Zealand, has something to do with its now-proven seismic performance (the original stone and concrete parts and their reinforcing)?
- This wing does have much more original stone than I had expected after seeing the South wing (that was nearly all lined internally with a layer of reinforced concrete block, and with solid or hybrid block internal shear walls). This west wing seems to rely more on strategically placed beams, and retains a lot more of the stone (which is what I had originally been told, and based my main facade strengthening idea on).
- The stone shear walls appear to all be capped with concrete beams (ring beam + columns = "confined masonry"), thus constrained (in their plane) to avoid the "explosion" failure of the church that I haven't yet described after my day 19 video (I've run out of space again). It also makes the walls very strong, and could be why they are so relatively crack-free.
- Look at the (small) amount of cracking left on the interior of the stone walls after the treatment the building has received from earthquakes and demolition. Does your house have this little cracking?
- Look at the way the digger carries and drops original stone walls, and they remain intact. The big piece is actually backed by reinforced blocks and doesn't come apart when dropped from a height (it hasn't broken in two, that's another beam in the foreground). Dunga?
- And for the people who insisted this building wasn't strengthened or reinforced at all, I can probably rest my case.

So, what do you think? Is this a weak unreinforced dunga, or is it a solid reinforced school that has been given further extensive reinforcing, so perhaps not just luck that kept it standing strong through 4 devastating earthquakes?

Why again is it being demolished in such a hurry? Anyone? Anyone?

Heritage Destruction in Christchurch - Cranmer Courts day 21

video uploaded and text published to YouTube 29/10/12



<http://youtu.be/fhwLyUNONV0>

Footage taken on:
Wednesday 24 Oct 2012, day 21 of demolition - Cranmer Court building
MORE INFO BELOW

Continued from Day 20:
<http://youtu.be/Jd8dznlX8vU>

Quick drive past in the evening to gather engineering photos and last call for arty shots, as this end of the building has seen its last sunset. Also a little bit of video for my viewer (whoever you are).

Another floor standing with one wall missing. That massively thick stone wall looked a bit dubious to my untrained eye, but is actually a corner, post-demolition. There's some decent cracks in this unit (ones even a red-zoner would be proud of) but I can't tell if they're all on the stone (in plaster) because it butts up against built in cupboards etc.

This unit has a concrete first floor. I'd swear some of it is original or at least much older than 1980s, for various reasons which I wrote up, but won't include here because that style of reinforcing with the wiggles on it (high bond deformed bar) didn't appear until ~1950. At least I've got plenty of photos (going to the university's SEISMIC project). Doesn't matter anyway, the building was in the pictured state for the earthquakes (except it wasn't collapsing).

Kind of glad I missed the demolition on this one, apparently there were billowing clouds of dust, much worse than other days - as visible on the road. Not good for my new camera.

Apparently they were going to save the windows which became cracked. Not sure if that happened. Presumably RS&B demolition crew, it's their job after all. (Got to say something to make up for all this free advertising, whatever the facts may be.) I also realised the historic "Cranmer Court 15" plaque (not shown in this vid) can't be original because it wasn't called that until the 1980s!

Once again run out of space to wedge in something political, but I might as well copy in my reply (from day 9 of demolition = 12/10/12) to someone who was trying to tell everyone the buildings were never earthquake strengthened during the 1980s rebuild, and were basically a crumbling mess (a widely held opinion):

"

Evidently quite strong due to survival of [greater than]0.5g PGA, multiple events / directions / depths / distances, with minimal structural damage for an apparently "URM" building. I have photos of the anchor plates before Feb, and their partial failure shortly afterwards. They looked old, possibly original, but it still counts as earthquake strengthening, as does the original steel, and gobs of new reinforcing to the structural additions. Also the fallage onto the gardens (the cordons were much further out into the road back then). It was nothing like the partial collapse of the Provincial Chambers, apart from the tower part. I was standing about 2m away from the facade yesterday while it was being demolished, apart from accusing stares from the contractors, I didn't feel in jeopardy. Of course, not recommended the public does this, and in fact 99.999% of the city's population doesn't/didn't (about 4 of 400k did = 0.001%), which is a fairly good solution if you're worried about safety. No one has offered to come up with whatever it's going to cost after a very likely looking deal fell through, because demolition was arranged overnight. Not disputing that people aren't fronting up with the cash, but who would in the face of ongoing CERA persecution. If I could buy the land (the building comes free) I'd go and buy \$50k of ties and wire rope and do the bloody job myself - from the outside. Heritage-meets-quake chic. Big project, but as a residential property owner I wouldn't have to comply with the hugely expensive OSH laws. But there's CERA. And a lot of technical details I don't actually know, I'm just saying. I thought the 21st century was supposed to be all about advanced technology and flying cars, yet we're completely stumped by anything which resembles Stonehenge.

"

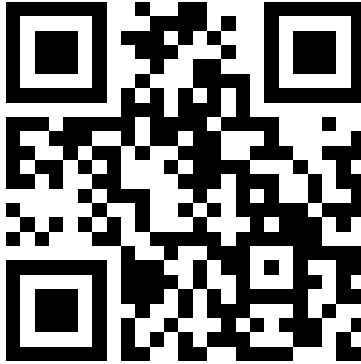
I never got a reply.

I admit the facade wasn't tied on all that well in that rebuild (apparently that's how they squeaked it through financially and saved the building from demolition), but it doesn't need to cost a good part of Kim Dotcom's net worth to get the job done safely as a retrofit. The building structure is there (well, not much left now), the stones just need to be tied to it.

In fact to give you some idea, assuming an average big stone of 100kg, to hold on for 1g lateral acceleration (assuming already supported vertically but otherwise free floating and nothing else coming loose) requires only 0.5mm² of ordinary unmarked 500MPa 304 stainless steel before it will come off (yes, 1mm diameter wire would hold it). An M2 fastener would give margin for things like preload, impact loads, and a few fatigue cycles (yes, that's one 2mm screw in the middle of the 100kg stone). I've never seen a masonry bit for a micro-fastener. Perhaps a portable abrasive waterjet?

Anyway compare that to the cost of the unnecessary demolition. How many red zone houses would that have built?

Heritage Destruction in Christchurch - Cranmer Courts day 22
video uploaded and text published to YouTube 31/10/12



<http://youtu.be/DX-sYZ-A1LY>

Footage taken on:
Thursday 25 Oct 2012, day 22 of demolition - Cranmer Court building
MORE INFO BELOW

Actually posting this after day 23:
<http://youtu.be/MONtgsC96A4>

Went early (unusual) after another late night editing video, plan being to catch the entrance being dismantled / demolished, and hopefully watch a beam I had previously got close-ups of being broken off, to check if it had structural damage. I was a bit early, but came back later.

I talked to some more people out taking photos, including the occupant of that unit (nothing surprising, but keeping these stories private for the time being since they had no idea who I was). Most people are aware the building "was fixable", but just assume the cost of repairs was too high (which wasn't the reason cited).

I did have a very surprising conversation with one of the contractors who was very forthcoming (with an "f") with an opinion which I won't go into here. (No not about CERA, nothing would surprise me there. It was something obvious.)

A couple of protestors were on the case, including The Wizard. I went back a bit later with supplies, and got to see the door being dismantled.

Re the workers 'in' the building - Gerry Brownlee might go berko at the sight of them "risking their lives" in an old "dunga" (which is pretty much what every

demo worker driving around in a previously "no go" building is doing) - but realise;

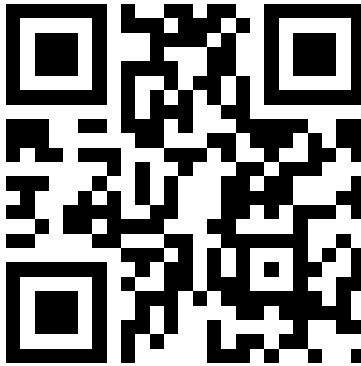
- a) that building had just had the crap smacked out of it with the digger, was not going to fall down on its own, and,
- b) even in this half demolished state, this building doesn't have the identified (and bungled) structural weaknesses which lead to the collapses of the most prominent buildings (CTV, PGC, 309 Durham St, 603 Colombo St, and there are more).

This is a very surprising conclusion. I had believed that the deaths were ultimately unavoidable, 'just' bad luck from a massive quake way exceeding design standards, "when your number's up, it's up, could have been anyone", sort of thing (which was undoubtedly true for some). But it's now becoming clear that bureaucratic bungling was directly responsible for the major losses of life in all these prominent collapses. From this I infer that a lot of "close calls" probably also had bureaucratic bungling which has not (yet) been exposed. It's reasonable to take this position (rather than just say "oh come on no one could have predicted that quake"), because of the 4 September and Boxing Day wake up calls, which in many cases led to the discoveries which were then bungled (and the remainder happened years ago). I'm still planning to cover these.

I'm not dragging all this death and destruction up to make people feel bad, or to make some political point (from which I stand to gain nothing), it's just that it's very important to recognise it for what it is (human error), and ask some questions of what is happening now in this mad dash to destroy everything that stands and rebuild with the smug complacency that we have everything under control (and by we, I mean CERA / GB, because the people have NO say). Anyway, head back in the sand.

Then off for a bit of a picnic and drive around which happened upon the Tap Room being demolished (enough for its own video), then some of the usual sights (train station demolition etc).

Heritage Destruction in Christchurch - Cranmer Courts day 23
video uploaded and text published to YouTube 30/10/12



<http://youtu.be/MONtgsC96A4>

Footage taken on:
Friday 26 Oct 2012, day 23 of demolition - Cranmer Court building
CHRISTCHURCH DEATH WISH BELOW

Last video was day 21, will post day 22 (Thursday) after more backlog is clear.

Off again on my bike for a quick catch up. I got there just in time to catch destruction of a roof. Notice them trying (and failing) to cut a steel frame (don't you hate it when scissors do that?). Anyway you get a good view of how strong the wooden roof structure is, and how to do some housekeeping with a big ball of reinforcing. Watch a million dollars of roofing iron come off. Take a look at the demolition shear (inner part of the jaws is) - notice how it's not small (this is a comparatively dainty one).

Stones now for sale. No one asked them to retain them. No one cares except for the contractors. How's that for upside down? Authorities couldn't organise a piss up in a brewery (they knocked that down too). I wonder how much that glass door is? I must admit I was keen on saving it, heritage heathen like me more interested in it than getting some of the original ornate stonework (what would I do with it - make a fountain? perhaps a 'reverse fountain' in the garden to use after a night on The Strip - oops they demolished that yesterday).

Then beeroclock for them, being Friday afternoon. Not for me though (brewery gone), so I continued with some engineering shots, notice how the

now-bowing (end) wall is holding up with bits dangling off it. It got nice and sunny so I repeated a few more structural shots and got plenty of arty photos.

Now if you've already watched the video, you must surely be thinking one thing:

HAVE WE LEARNT NOTHING?!!!

Parapets? Buses?! It's a little bit much.

In a flawed attempt to save people from "dungas", untested draconian laws are hastily thrown in place, and this building needs to be demolished urgently due to the danger. So CERA goes and does this.

Does anyone actually care?

Looks like that cat is the only sensible creature left in Christchurch. I briefly toyed with the idea of 'rescuing' it for an excuse to have a bit of a wander up there, but unlikely the unit's yellow sticker still applies. (Of course the cat wasn't "in danger" so don't worry about that.)

Ok, get your heart out of your mouth, remember this particular dangerous building is actually quite safe:

- Masonry confined and supported by ring beam, columns, and original stone buttresses (see the last few shots).
- They didn't leave it like that all weekend (finished off Sat morning, I heard it was a mission of smashing to get it down).
- The wall isn't high enough to squash a bus from the top, given the acceptable distance to the cordons (as I've stated before), and a blank strip that traffic isn't driving in.
- That strip is quite clearly not a normal pedestrian thoroughfare, and bystanders like me are quite capable of stepping back a bit if a quake starts up.

Still, it's not risk-free, and you see the raging contradiction in what they're telling us: CERA, please answer, is the building safe, or not? If it's safe, why are you demolishing it? If it's dangerous, why are you creating the situation displayed in the video? If it's a mistake, or too close to call, why ignore the Council resolution and push ahead in a rush?

CERA have told us this building is dangerous, so this could be any building in Christchurch, any demolition or rebuild. They're not just letting this stuff ride, but they are actively pushing it to the limits in some sort of egocentric bureaucratic frenzy. They pushed hard, especially after the Council voted to stop demolition. This clearly cuts to the top and can't be blamed on the owners or contractors. I also take particular issue with misrepresenting the

danger, because every false danger presented is a real danger hidden elsewhere.

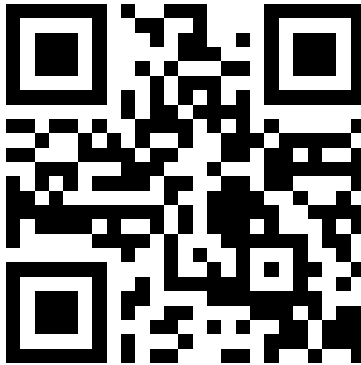
It's the biggest "up yours" I've seen to the idiots yet. I had to laugh because it is just so ridiculous, even though people died. It could have been me. If it was, I'd really hope that if someone was in a position to expose rampant hypocrisy or galloping bureaucratic ineptitude that had led to my death, that they would do so without hesitation. So there you go. This time it's CERA, not the Council, but the effect could be the same.

It's reasonable to suggest a percentage of increased deaths in Christchurch under this regime are due to man-made causes such as persecution and stress. My evidence would suggest it's only a matter of time before CERA kills someone directly. You could be next. Christchurch - do you even care one bit?

We are now slaves to a law that has brought a noxious mixture of hidden danger and blind complacency to a population that has lost its fear. An obvious recipe for disaster.

It's not doom and gloom, just be sensible, and don't trust the very visibly headless incompetence of the authorities.

Heritage Destruction in Christchurch - Cranmer Courts day 24
video uploaded and text published to YouTube 05/11/12



<http://youtu.be/Rt6unJps3Pg>

Footage taken on:
Saturday 27 Oct 2012, day 24 of demolition - Cranmer Court building
MORE INFO BELOW

Continued from Day 23:
<http://youtu.be/MONtgsC96A4>

Went to check the "parapet", yes they've taken it down (a mission, apparently "falling down" was not an option for it). Bits of paper and plastic blowing round, site turned into a dust bowl, missed capturing a little tornado (on film).

Building looking like a much shorter, more symmetrical, Cranmer Court. Except for the end wall, this is all now the 1878 kindergarten addition built 5 years later (cheaper angular windows, only 1 buttress). Retention would be quite easy, but how much of a thorn in the government's side would this be? I assume no amount of money could have saved this political hot potato at this point. The Peterborough Centre's flags symbolise the erect but tattered state of the country's democratic system.

Now, as promised, to follow up on Day 19's "thicker plot" (human error caused most deaths), starting with putting Gerry Brownlee's infamous "dungas" quote in perspective.

Introduced Day 19, refer:
<http://youtu.be/pt35x-6LIFE>

I CAN see Gerry's point, and even agreed with it at times. But it's very important to realise moves were afoot well before the Feb 22 quake.

For years I thought the 'bricky' buildings in town (eg SE of High St) had a distinct "dunga" feel. In fact check out my first video here "brick vs reinforced concrete" posted well BEFORE the "Christchurch earthquake" of Feb 22). I remember talking with a local MP in September 2010, lamenting a large row of collapsed facades, she used a word very similar to "dungas" then. (This was a Labour MP btw.)

After the quake two years ago, some greedy property developers couldn't contain their excitement, and were using the state of emergency to knock down heritage buildings as fast as they could (partly responsible for the Council's backlash, which becomes important later). This was their one chance (or so they thought) to secure their ticket to development of their previously locked-down heritage sites. The vaguest suspicion of damage (imagined or real) and "poof" building gone, proof gone. Some I agreed, some were just greed.

When the Feb quake hit nearly 6 months later, amidst the death and destruction, I remember thinking "well that buggers that then, they're all going to come down now" about the remaining heritage buildings, possibly even the Cathedral (until I heard no one had died there and realised it would become the enduring symbol of the city's survival).

In hindsight, opinions of "dungas" (including mine) were at best well-meaning conjecture. By the time of the Feb 22 quake, Cranmer Court was well cordoned off and had had extensive repairs to the roof where the chimneys fell through - but chimneys fell (or "Rubik Cubed" like here) everywhere in September. Waking up to the feeling of falling bricks was unpleasant for some, very badly injured one, but no one was killed. Not structural (risking building collapse). Some brick buildings were inexplicably undamaged (brick infill reinforced concrete, or brick veneer where I live), which was surprising. So beware conjecture and knee-jerk reactions, building strength isn't an area for guesswork.

When GB gave an interview 2 hours after he landed on the ground (!) back in NZ (only watched this 'today' (day 24) and most Chcharians missed this of course), I can see he is clearly speaking from a position of shock and surprise. But you've got to realise, a lot of the "dungas" were already long since down. And GB had been earthquake minister for almost 6 months by then, and already had formed very strong opinions and agendas and relationships, and had ALREADY got "the Canterbury Earthquake Response and Recovery Act 2010 is one of the most extreme legislative acts ever seen

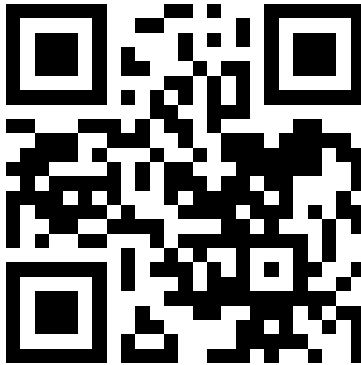
in New Zealand" through Parliament. These laws were not supposed to be used indiscriminately.

I still don't know exactly when Gerry made the now infamous "dungas" statement (power still off? certainly not interested in a politician bleating on after a national disaster), but it was a few days afterwards. In that context I can understand it quite clearly, it seems to be made out of fear or shock, perhaps misplaced guilt from responsibility as the earthquake minister and/or not being here at the time, and is a bit illogical. Forgivable, understandable, and even agreeable at the time. But knowing about his past agenda and this new opportunity to wield absolute power (and make no mistake, that is what he has legislatively) following the Feb quake, I find that potentially very perverse.

What the law community then feared, is now coming to pass in the form of persecution, bullying, inept decision making, and mad authoritarian fury. This dangerous mix fuels the propaganda machine, and has turned NZ on itself (Chch lapping it up, rest of the country giving us a wide berth believing whatever they're told and think we've all gone mad or something). IT'S JUST NOT REAL.

Heritage Destruction in Christchurch - Cranmer Courts day 25

video uploaded and text published to YouTube 07/11/12



http://youtu.be/WiMR_kh7Hdc

Footage taken on:
Sunday 28 Oct 2012, day 25 of demolition - Cranmer Court building
MORE INFO BELOW

Continued from Day 24:
<http://youtu.be/Rt6unJps3Pg>

Another quick bike ride to get closer shots of the beam I had taken close ups of before (with my 'magic' zoom lens). Video almost not worth posting but this way I can leave a post.

Someone had scrawled a "lives B4 buildings" across a protest sign. Ok, everyone deserves a voice. So I left it, and took a video to illustrate a typical false argument that these uneducated book-burner sheep parrot away at. They don't know what to believe so they choose anything, in this case a sound bite output directly from the propaganda machine. The message makes no sense, is it "buildings are bad, ban all buildings"? Or rip down the strong ones (like this) that killed no one, ignorant of the fact just one modern to-code building killed 115 people? It would make more sense for me to scrawl "lives b4 roads" on the adjacent road sign in an effort to bring down the road toll. Gives them something to believe in, but thick as two planks. (And that's my voice.)

Back to Day 19's "thicker plot", first up The Durham St Methodist Church collapse in a bit more detail, because this is what GB's dungas statement directly refers to - heritage building completely collapsed killing 3 of 6 workers

inside who were rescuing an organ. This is really cut from 7 pages to 1 so I can't cover it all.

I looked into this properly on/since the day I took this video. Only then did I realise it was only a block away from Cranmer Courts (a story in itself, and exposes potential inconsistencies in the official record which I want to look into).

This building was unreinforced masonry except for wooden interior and roof structure. The Church was aware it was an earthquake prone building before September, and by the time the men were in it, visible damage was mounting, still holding up, but had become extremely weak on paper (less than 10% of code strength). One theory presented was basically that the ground shot up and fell away, floated the stones, meanwhile the ground was moving sideways, so the stones fell back down with nothing underneath them. I now doubt that scenario (due to its location), but can imagine they were punched about violently, to the same effect. Although the men were in a reasonably safe part of the building, the building basically exploded and rocks went everywhere. There's two ways of looking at this:

One is that it was technically a once in 2500 year event, it can't be reasonable to expect this to happen while you're in there, anyway it could happen to any stone building, in any part of NZ, which means all old stone buildings in the country have to be knocked down immediately to solve the problem.

The other is that the risk of a "6 in the city" was known (yet to explain), reasonably high, but deliberately withheld from the public in an admitted bout of social engineering. Had the men, their employer, the project manager, and even the engineers involved known this (they relied on the same public information and this is clear in the Royal Commission evidence), they could have chosen other options, including safety shielding (which was considered), an even quicker removal plan (eg 2 days were provided to remove internal scaffolding), not going in at all, or to just accept the risk on a personal level and 'say their last goodbyes' just in case. (In other words, the application of the risk factor of 0.5 was technically sound I think, but remained at great odds with reality at the time.)

There were a lot of other bureaucratic problems, mainly relating to heritage issues from the Council (different from GB's point), basically seems it turned into a pissing match. However these were mostly able to be brushed aside, and were probably not all that instrumental in the loss of life.

Also it's important to see this case for what it is, while tragic, only 3 people died, who were at least partly aware of the risks. So I think it's important not

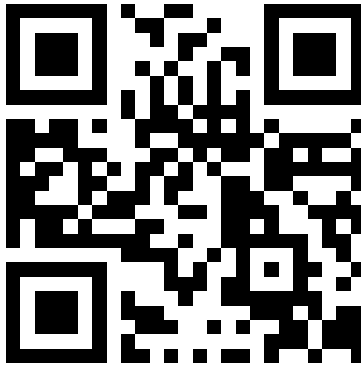
to blow this out of context, or demean the heroism of those who were working out of passion and taking a risk to save a life's work, and then turn this into a political issue (I hope I'm not). This was not a public tragedy. It could have been full of churchgoers. The building was sufficiently cordoned from the public, "battering ram" props helped stop it falling outwards onto the street. Even knowing the risk I would have still gone in there (for half an hour or so, much longer I'd want more protection to at least give me a sporting chance).

Also, please correct me if I'm wrong, but these were the only deaths from a stone building. This fact is widely ignored.

My conclusion: Social engineering backfired and contributed materially to the deaths (plus other bureaucracy didn't help). Knocking down buildings doesn't make the problem go away.

Heritage Destruction in Christchurch - Cranmer Courts day 26

video uploaded and text published to YouTube 07/11/12



<http://youtu.be/nzDoyU0WCLc>

Footage taken on:
Monday 29 Oct 2012, day 26 of demolition - Cranmer Court building
MORE INFO BELOW

Continued from Day 25:
http://youtu.be/WiMR_kh7Hdc

First an 'arty' shot of the post-tensioned wood building at the university (put up between Sept and Feb quakes, to my camera's great interest after seeing it set up in the civil eng lab), currently building another one in town (in my Cranmer day 17 video).

Then another quick drive to catch up with progress, before it got completely dark.

Right, as promised, more death and destruction - collapse of the Austral Building Colombo St façade (spanned a block, mixed ownership): 4 pedestrians killed by 603, 8 people killed on a bus by 605 (not including injuries, or other deaths nearby). I'm just going to have to be very matter of fact about this - again it could have been me, in fact more than I realised when looking into the details. Only doing that now because I didn't (want to) know exactly where this happened (I don't think anyone in Christchurch really does?).

It turns out I chose probably the most dangerous single square metre of Christchurch I possibly could have (if you count CTV as 8 floors) to shelter from the rain, under the awning of 603, standing right under the parapet and

wall 5 days after the September quake, to take photos of the gaping hole in the side of 601 (Longhorn Leather). I remember feeling a bit uneasy, fortunately there was no protection fence in place anywhere along 603-north (inconsistent with evidence in the Royal Commission inquiry), so my plan would have been to "hoof it" into the centre of the road, or take shelter in the doorway (like plenty of people later did around the city).

Like the church, it won't remotely fit in 900 words, but:

main facts:

- unstrengthened, cracked, known-dangerous "dunga", since at least 1982
- no fences or barricades put up (603 eventually got one)
- tenant/owner, loss adjuster, and builder noted façade was leaning out, up to 80mm gap, indications the whole facade (stretching a block) was starting to come off
- Council engineers did not go inside citing barricades, were not sure what to focus on, given no plans, no GNS data, false information over internal inspections, some other inconsistencies (competent, but confused)
- Colombo St is the main drag of Christchurch, one owner had buildings on opposite sides, ideally both requiring barricading to the centre of the street
- demolition was on the cards from the start (Sep), but overshadowed and rendered planned \$200k make-safe works uneconomic
- demolition stalled in a 6 month heritage resource consent despite warnings of extreme danger and unanimous agreement, people unaware of the RMA overrides available until it was too late
- all this red tape over what was only a Heritage 4 listed building that (from what I can tell) no one really cared about (but refer Council backlash Day 24)

key smoking guns:

- "Any work will require building consent which is likely to trigger the need for structural upgrade to 67% of the current code."
- "Q. Did you have any information from GNS about the likely aftershocks that may be experienced in future? A. Nothing than what was sort of broadly available to the public, no."

At first sight this seems to be ideal justification for CERA's 'new' powers. To a point, I agree. But CERA's approach is a vast overreaction, one that throws the baby out with the bathwater. They just demolish the lot, dangerous or not, the older the better. Well after the horse has bolted. That was never the right solution to a VERY REAL problem of dangerous buildings (it does not address the "bungling", hence solving the wrong problem). Dangerous heritage dungas replaced with dangerous heritage destruction (see my videos).

Pre-Feb, heritage protection was much like the heritage destruction is now: mandated, legislated, bound up in rules. No one making decisions. Just replaced one problem with its equal opposite. Except CERA aren't patching the problem, they are destroying and rebuilding it from scratch, with a total lack of public input.

Government was limp-wristed on codes. But start digging and it's soon tied up in a lot of realities which only end up exposing the haphazard nature of building codes themselves - so blanket "enforcement" was never the answer. Still, where's the drive for continuous improvement, or funding research for strengthening old buildings?

Irrelevant in this case, we had two powerful very timely wake-up calls, ignored completely (by the authorities) in the case of 605 which killed 8 people. (These warnings mopped up I'm guessing 1000s of accidental deaths, leaving mostly predictable ones.)

Bureaucratic and regulatory incompetence killed those 12 people, not the earthquake, not even lack of building codes. Again, it was not bad luck. It was totally predictable, totally preventable, many times over. Evidence suggests it may have just come down on its own had the 2011 quakes not happened. Can't really blame that on an earthquake.

Heritage Destruction in Christchurch - Cranmer Courts day 27
video uploaded and text published to YouTube 08/11/12



<http://youtu.be/PTZJhAim1DU>

Footage taken on:
Tuesday 30 Oct 2012, day 27 of demolition - Cranmer Court building
MORE INFO BELOW

Continued from Day 26:
<http://youtu.be/nzDoyU0WCLc>

This video just a very quick update before engaging in some highly secret activism activities (in full view of 1000s of drivers on their way home).

Ok, back to the preventable deaths. Last but not least, these 2 buildings:

PGC (18 died):

I haven't gone through this with a fine-toothed comb, I just wanted an answer to "was it bungled / preventable, or was it an accident?". You can decide:

Yes it was an old building (45 years). But engineers identified a "severe seismic weakness" in 2007, after (yes after) strengthening work was done in 1997, when warnings the central tower would crack in a moderate quake were ignored by owners. Resulting strength as low as 30% of current requirement, with a string of defects. Building was sold, new buyer unaware, land agent never told them. Post-Sept checks done by the same engineering firm, who backtracked in the inquiry.

CTV (115 died):

This is obviously the single biggest building collapse and resulting loss of life in Christchurch and presumably NZ, ever. It's not really for me to judge, I know the final Royal Commission report isn't out yet (may not be for the other collapses, I didn't realise that). But I can make a provisional snap judgement purely from memory, of:

- 1) Liar faking his engineering degree (by stealing someone else's identity) who supervised construction, that's pretty much enough for me.
- 2) Watching bickering between designers over who did and didn't do what or review what. I've seen it before and I can guess what happened.

This doesn't prove anything - except bureaucratic bungling (which is the point I'm trying to make) of the highest order. It was the only modern building to suffer a total and absolute catastrophic collapse. Either that's bad luck, or these things are related. I applied for a job there after uni. so the first thing I thought is "ooh". But it was days before we got to see images of the site on TV (although I had rigged up an old laptop running off 12V batteries on my desk, so got to see a few pictures before that). I just wanted to go and help, but I knew I wouldn't be allowed.

So that concludes my "thicker plot" explanations, I hope you now see why I said (back on Day 19) it was very important for people to understand the reality, rather than just bleat along with my not-necessarily-so-good MP's "they're dangerous, knock em down" rhetoric. He fears old buildings. He screams at them apparently. People believe him. They want to believe him, because they want to be shown the safe way. But it's madness.

Observe this little table:

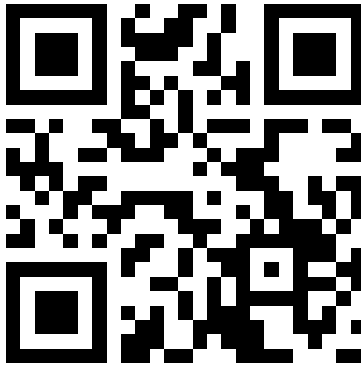
(Comparing:	Cranmer	/	CTV)
Killed:	0	/	115
Survived large (6+) quakes:	4	/	1
Building completed:	1876	/	1987
Years since last mega-quake:	21 (Wairarapa)	/	56 (Napier)
Layout:	walls	/	columns
Primary construction:	RC+stone	/	RC
Designer & builder:	Legendary heroes	/	oh dear
Additional strengthening:	extensive	/	none

I know I'm picking and choosing my cases here, but I've spent a month of my life exposing the Cranmer Courts ruse exactly to make this point. WHY must Gerry obliterate all buildings like this, when they are not and never were the problem? How many reinforced heritage stone masonry buildings killed anyone? None, it seems (it's hard to find that sort of info). The propaganda

machine would have you believe all of them. That's quite the discrepancy YET WE BELIEVE IT.

The bigger question really is, knowing how CERA is founded on these strange rules, is what they are doing safe? If they are working in the city's best interests, then why aren't we allowed to have any say? Why are decisions over important public issues made in secret then kept secret? What if I'm wrong and it's not just a headless monster, but an actual conspiracy? Who would know (other than the conspiracy theorists)? I can see the obvious point to having an authority with supreme power, but how on earth is that supposed to work in the real world?

Heritage Destruction in Christchurch - Cranmer Courts day 28
video uploaded and text published to YouTube 08/11/12



<http://youtu.be/MyfCQMYIhVQ>

Footage taken on:
Wednesday 31 Oct 2012, day 28 of demolition - Cranmer Court building
MORE INFO BELOW

Continued from Day 27:
<http://youtu.be/PTZJhAim1DU>

Suspecting there's not much left of the building, I covered the "Listen to Christchurch" protest march about school closures - the other main hot potato for the authorities, and an example of the wider Christchurch democracy movement, so that's most of this video, I'll let it speak for itself. (If you're not interested in democracy, skip to the last 3 minutes.)

After that I grabbed shots of the last little tiny bit that's left of the building. Still in awe at the amount of concrete steel in it - it was rebuilt and strengthened to never come down in a quake. It didn't. That took the ignorance of man. Had a quick chat with a protestor who was there early enough to see the contractors try to get it down, immense bashing required. Helped a visitor get his car through the road cordon. BTW, that upside down shot isn't some (f)artistic reference to the way the city's psyche is upside down - I was just holding the tripod upside down on my way home.

Ok. Democracy (or lack thereof). One thing is certain - that any time that large groups of people complain about there not being a democracy, then, by definition, there isn't one. Once again; people don't complain about there being a lack of democracy if there isn't.

The city is breathing, heart is beating, but appears to be out cold - even the marchers haven't quite yet woken up. It may be unconscious, but it's not lying on the ground in the recovery position any more, now it's lying on the operating table, having vital organs swapped about - take out a couple of kidneys, put in a spare pancreas, try to transplant a new heart without realising the old one is pumping strong, now they're poised with the scalpel in hand, starting to wonder if it needs a brain at all...

If it was me, I would leave just that last bit of the building as a nice little ruin sitting there, encased in a glass box, for all the world to see, with a sign reading:
"destruction: man made"

Which is a nice place to close up the four weeks with a little conclusion, as this 137 year old building truly has seen its last sunset today:

The natural disaster was a terrible tragedy that killed about 30-40 people at my estimate, it ruined many inner city brick shops and cost billions in mainly modern damaged buildings, ripped suburbs in half, turned the roads into fountains, cut off the power and blocked the toilets.

But it didn't kill most of the people,
it didn't destroy most of the buildings,
it didn't draw up the new city plan,
it didn't force property owners off their land,
it didn't raise rents,
it didn't generate a land grab,
it didn't cause insurance fraud,
it didn't make people homeless 2 years on,
it didn't delay insurance payments,
it didn't destroy the heritage buildings,
it didn't ruin the Cathedral,
it didn't dump democracy,
it didn't give Gerry power over everything,
it didn't make officials wear hardhats in the open,
it didn't come as a surprise.

That was people.

Then again, people made the container mall, and the positive attitude about the rebuild that existed a year ago. It's just that they've lost their way now, and we've had enough of the dictatorship, don't care whether it's well-meaning or just an ego trip, it's time for them to let go.

And here endeth my lesson (except a few extras to post over the next few days, don't worry, there's still 2 weeks to dig up the site and turn it into a nice little (car) park).

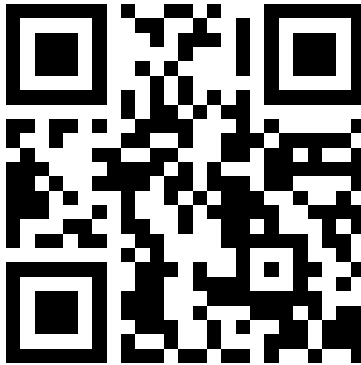
Hey, before I go, a question, CERA: Why are you still performing urgent "dangerous building" demolitions two years on? By your own definition, isn't that red tape getting in the way of safety? But up to 4 times longer than the Council you replaced? Why have you not brought criminal charges against so-called negligent owners of so-called 'dangerous' buildings?

(The answer is, because it's fake. The buildings mostly aren't dangerous, the government wants control of where the insurance billions go. New building stock to attract foreign investment?)

The original problem with dangerous heritage buildings was that Council were so tied up in red tape that the emergency response period was 6 months. The new laws were put there to cut through this red tape. Only problem is it's a blunt tool, so in CERA's attempts to slice through it, it just became more of a tangled mess at the end of their blunt tool, and now they're really struggling. Unsafe demolitions, rushed-quality temporary buildings being thrown up, public angst, and democracy marches of all things.

But they go on believing. Ego is a powerful thing.

Heritage Destruction in Christchurch - Cranmer Courts day 29
video uploaded and text published to YouTube 25/11/12



<http://youtu.be/cmQ57DyMUxc>

Footage taken on:
Thursday 1 Nov 2012, day 29 of demolition - Cranmer Court building
MORE INFO BELOW

Continued from Day 28:
<http://youtu.be/MyfCQMYIhVQ>

One day later, and 5 weeks to the day after demolition began, what's left barely stands thigh. Cordons pulled back.

Now to explain my "6 in the city" comment as promised on Day 25:

http://youtu.be/WiMR_kh7Hdc

Actually I did pretty much cover it Day 13b in the section "Christchurch is all about social engineering."...

<http://youtu.be/YcJrw4JAoBU>

... where I said "they" hid the risk of the quake which hit in February: GNS were telling us to expect a 6 from the beginning, they were also allowed to tell us aftershocks had started occurring under the city, but not allowed to warn of the consequences of a 6+ under the city.

This does sound a bit conspiracy theory-ey, and came from my memory of news articles (mainly TV, news has to be sensationalised otherwise literally

no one would read or watch it). Looking at better sources only shows well-meaning meddling in the name of social science. (But was it? This recommendation was never investigated publicly, and the desire to "return to business as normal" was all over the news at the time.)

The main problem with it, and a recurring theme through many of the Royal Commission hearings, is that this well-meaning deception was part of a destructive synergy which broke the system that's designed to protect us against earthquakes: It wasn't just the public - but project managers, engineers, and building owners who were (rightly or wrongly) relying on the same information for risk analysis.

Like many people going into town before Feb, I was very aware of the possibility of a literally explosive quake, having seen what the 4.9 did on Boxing Day. It was bad enough here, 5km away, made quite the mess for a "tiddler". The predicted 6.1 generates $10^{(6.1-4.9)} \approx 16$ times stronger shaking (assuming linear ground response, and at a distance), and releases 63 times more energy. I assumed that was house-exploding stuff, to the point where I actually thought (or hoped) the Feb22 quake was a small localised 5 (despite having enough warning to film <http://youtu.be/Wrmj5UVMYII>). But going to the epicentre at Heathcote Valley a couple of months later (I was over quake stuff for a while), I was absolutely astounded to see pretty much everything standing and visibly unaffected, including (well constructed) brick buildings, and the old maltworks silo - the 2.2g PGA was the greatest ground shaking directly recorded to date (Japan then took that dubious honour a few weeks later). Even the roads weren't too bad. Although the location of this quake was a surprise, it was just as bad as a 6 under the CBD.

So it's not as if we didn't know.

But the fact remains a warning of the likely outcome was conspicuously lacking, this meant something - effectively saying "a 6 is likely, but don't worry, we're sure it won't happen under the city". In our cotton wool society, we rely on bad news to keep us real, otherwise we just switch off and assume everything is "safe".

Was it really social science? Science is the slow and painstaking pursuit of knowledge, a new finding will cause scientists go into a huddle for the next 20 years trying to work out how they can reconcile it with the "body of scientific opinion". So no. What we had was social engineering = manipulating the thoughts of living people, up there with mass marketing, propaganda, PR, ratings etc.

Scientific basis perhaps, but to do the calculations based on sound research then turn round and deprive people of science, in the name of science - to me

that's "antiscience" and largely not real. It's opinion, made up, and a lot of the "trauma" was a media fabrication. We weren't all as terrified as the sensationalised news reports would have you believe. People were getting a bit weary of it, some hammered by misfortune, but no trauma, and certainly no panic. I find that very hard to believe when we were being told "go shopping, help with the economic recovery". The media was hungry for stories, desperate for emotion, happy to park their cameras in front of the same burning building. They never interview people who didn't "see the fireball". (Watch "When a City Falls" to see something more real.)

Applying 'science' (or psychology) from afar just asks for trouble. Distant observers allow expectations, conjecture and hearsay to override a population's own directly observed reality: "Those poor bastards, they don't know which way is up, what I think makes much more sense, so it must be right".

Anyway, science or politics, deception was admitted, people died.

So who is "they"? business leaders? economists? corporate executives? government? No, it cuts right to the very top - US. (Not the US of A, the US of us.) The citizens who "want to believe". We demand absolute safety. We lap up sensation. We fuel the fires of corporate and national economic greed. We vote them in!

It's happening again.

Heritage Destruction in Christchurch - Cranmer Courts day 30
video uploaded and text published to YouTube 07/12/12



<http://youtu.be/3tOyddrLCHc>

Footage taken on:
Friday 2 Nov 2012, day 30 of demolition - Cranmer Court building
MORE INFO BELOW

Continued from Day 29:
<http://youtu.be/cmQ57DyMUxc>

Nipped in to rescue some broken stone. Remember that fountain I mentioned on day 23? Here it is. Cracked in two represents the... Water running over the clean slate represents... (Work it out yourself, it's meaningless, like CERA's demolition, so it can represent that.) Being the middle of the day, I decided not to try the reverse fountain.

Time for a crackpot conspiracy theory (yes, my other posts are factual and verifiable and await challenge). Tinfoil hat on.

Gerry Brownlee is of a devout Catholic background, he taught as a woodwork teacher at St Bede's College, a "Catholic community".

Shortly after the Feb 22 earthquake he said: "Quite frankly people have died in this last earthquake trying to save old buildings. We're not going to do that any more. My absolutely strong position is that the old dungas, no matter what their connection, are going under the hammer."

But in an apparent about-face, on 5 March 2011, he said if he had his way, most of Christchurch's heritage buildings would be demolished but that he

would like to see resources go into rebuilding the ChristChurch Cathedral, the Catholic Basilica, the Canterbury Provincial Chambers and the Christchurch Arts Centre – but that's it ... They won't be put back the way they were.". Considering it was common knowledge the Anglicans were growing out of their cathedral (the Bishop soon applied to have it demolished), while the Catholics just quietly got on with preservation and restoration - doesn't that seem awfully convenient?

Earlier 2012 he also said it was interesting that Christchurch had identified itself with the [Anglican] cathedral. "That's a great thing, but is it that cathedral, or is it the fact that we have a cathedral in the centre of the city? I'm not able to work that out myself in any strong way." Hmm fishy.

Mecca suffers heritage destruction too, one problem is stone-carved names of previous empires embarrassing the current authorities. Christchurch has those "evil" looking gothic buildings. I wonder if he feels a sense of embarrassment in having the symbol of the antichrist at the very centre of the city?

Having just checked out Wikipedia, I am all-knowledgeable in these matters: "Cranmer" was a dude at the centre of a battle of wills between the Catholics and Anglicans in the 1500s. His last official words were: "And as for the pope, I refuse him, as Christ's enemy, and Antichrist with all his false doctrine.". This went down poorly with the Catholic authorities, and he was taken and burnt at the stake immediately (his intention). Crap storm ended in Rome losing its grip on Britain, and labelling Queen Elizabeth a "servant of crime" after she took on Cranmer's rule book.

Interestingly, Cranmer Court and the Cranmer Centre have gone under the hammer with the Anglican Cathedral set to follow. The Arts Centre, Museum, various other stone gothic buildings, and the Catholic Cathedral look likely to be spared the wrath of the authorities. (Or should I say authority, because there is only one man with total control.)

So possibly the biggest noose around Cranmer Court's neck was simply its name - given to it only after it was strengthened in the 1980s, a name that comes from the Square it looked onto. However, words like "Cranmer" (or "antichrist" perhaps) drag with them a powerful heritage, a volatile accelerant for this centuries old war.

FYI I'm absolutely not religious, in fact I'm bordering on an atheist (however my religion* prevents me from being one). *By religion I mean personal philosophy. I'm a scientist at heart - not some grunt who blindly props up the "body of scientific opinion" (is that represented during conference by baked carbohydrate product washed down with a dash of ethyl alcohol?) - but one

who seeks facts and does not want "to believe". But ultimately every experience and thought is subjective, so this presents rather a curly paradox, however my religion of believing in the lack of belief itself covers that one nicely.

In our daily lives we all have one foot on solid ground and the other foot on nothing, so why should I want to believe any different?

Now that I've offended or scared pretty much everyone, tin hat off.

Actually, I'm so uncultured, I'd think a Roman cathedral is a large building able to wheel about on its own (at least just the dome). And an Anglican cathedral should do double duty as a protractor (or at least an equilateral triangle).

What's happening sounds more related to the Brownlee family's longstanding feud with the building industry (which itself has ties to Cranmer Court). The Church of England is effectively on the same side as Catholics "catholic and reformed", so that was all a bit of a spat at the end of the day. (And after I wrote this a month ago, the fortunes of the Catholic and Anglican Cathedrals seem to have reversed - for now anyway.)

