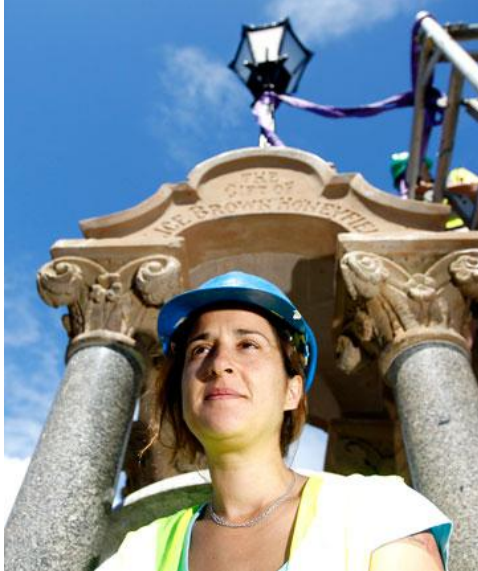


Fountain back on its spot on the walkway

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Last updated 05:00 01/03/2014

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BACK IN PLACE: Ana Machado checks out the repaired Honeyfield Fountain, which has been returned to the Coastal Walkway nearly 10 months after it was knocked over by a stolen car.

New Plymouth's iconic Honeyfield Fountain has been restored to its former glory after being wiped out by a stolen car last year.

Stone conservator Ana Machado has been painstakingly putting the fountain back together for the last five months.

Yesterday the final piece of the giant jigsaw puzzle was completed when Ms Machado lowered the fountain onto its foundation near Govett Quilliam law firm.

The Auckland-based conservation artist said she had spent many hours tucked away rebuilding the monument in her workshop.

As well as putting parts back together she had to fill corners, recast flowers and smooth off the edges of the fountain. "I have had to make all of the repairs very inconspicuous because there were a lot of broken parts to this."

The destruction of the 107-year-old fountain was the result of a 15-year-old Taranaki youth losing control of a stolen 1982 Honda City in the middle of the night last April.

The youth, who police said had been drinking, sped through a red light at New Plymouth's St Aubyn and Dawson streets intersection, hit a rise in the road, became airborne and ended up bowling over the fountain.

The New Plymouth District Council's insurance excess is \$100,000, so most of the \$50,000 repair bill was paid for from the depreciation reserves.

Miss Machado trucked down the marble, sandstone and wrought-iron structure from Auckland on Thursday night, and said she would be here until this afternoon putting the finishing touches on the monument.

The fountain was donated to the city in 1907 by Alice Brown Honeyfield.

In 2004, New Plymouth District councillors Mike Merrick, Elaine Gill and Alex Matheson formed the Friends of the Honeyfield Fountain to raise the required funds for its restoration, which happened in 2007 for a cost of \$49,500.

Yesterday Mr Merrick said he was delighted that the fountain had been put back in its rightful place.

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