

**DISTRICT PLAN – LISTED HERITAGE PLACE
HERITAGE ASSESSMENT – STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE
HERITAGE ITEM NUMBER 1136
*ERSKINE POINT GUN EMPLACEMENT AND SETTING – 8 PARK
TERRACE, LYTTELTON***



PHOTOGRAPH: MARGARET LOVELL-SMITH, 2013

HISTORICAL AND SOCIAL SIGNIFICANCE

Historical and social values that demonstrate or are associated with: a particular person, group, organisation, institution, event, phase or activity; the continuity and/or change of a phase or activity; social, historical, traditional, economic, political or other patterns.

The gun emplacement at Erskine Point has high historical and social significance as one of a series of defensive structures built around Lyttelton Harbour in the 1880s and for its association with defence uses into the mid-20th century. Tapoa or Erskine Point, which was named after Commodore JE Erskine and located overlooking Lyttelton Harbour between Lyttelton and Corsair Bay, has had a long association with the provision of military defences. Associated with it are the larger defence structures at Battery Point and on Ripapa Island. The land was sold by Thomas Hodsson Parkinson to William Rolleston, Superintendent of the Canterbury Province, in 1875 for public purposes. In 1877 the land was brought under the provisions of the Public Domains Act 1865. In 1888 five acres of the site was taken under the Public Works Act for construction of works for defence purposes. Baker's Bay below the

point was already being used by the military following the 'Russian Scare' in 1882. Another 'Russian Scare' in 1885, when war between Britain and Russia seemed imminent, was the catalyst for the decision to establish a gun battery on Ripapa Island and gun positions at Erskine and Battery Points to provide coverage of the whole harbour. The gun at Erskine Point would command the entrance to the port between the breakwaters.

After the construction had commenced, a decision was made to move a 7-inch, 7-ton gun from its emplacement at Officers' Point (Timeball Station site) to Erskine Point, even though the emplacement had been constructed for a less powerful gun. This meant the gun could not be fired at full charge. The gun emplacement was dug into the hillside and protected by a concrete parapet on the seaward side, with a packed earth parapet to the south and a trench leading to a magazine was dug into the hillside to the north. In 1890-91 the battery was upgraded using prison labour. A gunner's cottage, which no longer survives, was built nearby at this time.

The gun was decommissioned in c.1904 and was finally scrapped in 1934. The barrel was rescued by the Redcliffs Sea Cadets and set up outside their headquarters on the main road at Redcliffs. Although the Cadets' building has been demolished, the barrel is still in position. The area of the emplacement was used for defence purposes again in World War II and was therefore a Prohibited Place from 1941-1945. The emplacement's magazine was demolished in the second half of the 20th century by Lyttelton Borough Council. The land became the Lyttelton Recreation Reserve in 1984 and is a popular walking and picnicking place. The emplacement is currently fenced off following damage to the cliff edge and concrete parapet in the Canterbury earthquakes. Loose pieces of the parapet were removed as an emergency make-safe measure in 2012.

CULTURAL AND SPIRITUAL SIGNIFICANCE

Cultural and spiritual values that demonstrate or are associated with the distinctive characteristics of a way of life, philosophy, tradition, religion, or other belief, including: the symbolic or commemorative value of the place; significance to Tangata Whenua; and/or associations with an identifiable group and esteemed by this group for its cultural values.

The gun emplacement at Erskine Point has cultural significance as evidence of the defensive structures thought appropriate for repelling possible invasion by enemy forces into Lyttelton Harbour in the 1880s.

ARCHITECTURAL AND AESTHETIC SIGNIFICANCE

Architectural and aesthetic values that demonstrate or are associated with: a particular style, period or designer, design values, form, scale, colour, texture and material of the place.

The Erskine Point Gun Emplacement has architectural and aesthetic significance as an example of a 19th century defensive structure and relics of the much larger installation that was once on this site. Following the Canterbury earthquakes of 2010-2011 the gun emplacement lost some of its concrete parapet. However, the concrete pad with its metal racer ring, the central pivot and much of the parapet still remain.

TECHNOLOGICAL AND CRAFTSMANSHIP SIGNIFICANCE

Technological and craftsmanship values that demonstrate or are associated with: the nature and use of materials, finishes and/or technological or constructional methods which were innovative, or of notable quality for the period.

The gun emplacement has technological and craftsmanship significance as it demonstrates the construction methods and materials used in military defence systems in the later 19th century.

CONTEXTUAL SIGNIFICANCE

Contextual values that demonstrate or are associated with: a relationship to the environment (constructed and natural), a landscape, setting, group, precinct or streetscape; a degree of consistency in terms of type, scale, form, materials, texture, colour, style and/or detail; recognised landmarks and landscape which are recognised and contribute to the unique identity of the environment.

The Erskine Point Gun Emplacement and its setting have high contextual significance as part of a wider planned defensive system for Lyttelton Harbour established in the late 19th century. The other key defences from this time are Battery Point and Ripapa Island. It is also close to the 1874 Magazine at Magazine Bay, which is now the Lyttelton Torpedo Boat Museum. The gun emplacement is the most accessible of the associated defensive locations in the area.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND SCIENTIFIC SIGNIFICANCE

Archaeological or scientific values that demonstrate or are associated with: the potential to provide information through physical or scientific evidence an understanding about social historical, cultural, spiritual, technological or other values of past events, activities, structures or people.

The Erskine Point Gun Emplacement and its setting have archaeological significance because they have the potential to provide archaeological evidence relating to past building construction methods and materials, and human activity on the site, including that which occurred prior to 1900.

ASSESSMENT STATEMENT

The Erskine Point Gun Emplacement and its setting has overall significance to Banks Peninsula and Christchurch. It has high historical and social significance as one of a series of defensive structures built to defend Lyttelton Harbour in the 1880s and subsequently used until the mid-20th century. The former gun emplacement at Erskine Point has cultural significance as evidence of the defensive structures thought appropriate for repelling possible invasion by enemy forces into Lyttelton Harbour in the 1880s. The gun emplacement has architectural significance as an example of a 19th century defensive

structure and a relic of the much larger installation that was once on this site. The gun emplacement has technological and craftsmanship significance as it demonstrates military construction techniques in the late 19th century. The Erskine Point gun emplacement and its setting has high contextual significance as part of a wider planned defensive system for Lyttelton Harbour in the late 19th century and archaeological significance in regards to its age and location. The Erskine Point Gun Emplacement and its setting have archaeological significance because they have the potential to provide archaeological evidence relating to past building construction methods and materials, and human activity on the site, including that which occurred prior to 1900.

REFERENCES:

Christchurch City Council Heritage File *Erskine Point Gun Emplacement*
Lovell-Smith, M., *Background Information Listed Heritage Place, Erskine Point Gun Emplacement, Lyttelton* – 2013
<https://sites.google.com/site/nzcoastaldefences/lyttelton-s-coastal-defences/erskine-point>

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PLEASE NOTE THIS ASSESSMENT IS BASED ON INFORMATION AVAILABLE AT THE TIME OF WRITING. DUE TO THE ONGOING NATURE OF HERITAGE RESEARCH, FUTURE REASSESSMENT OF THIS HERITAGE ITEM MAY BE NECESSARY TO REFLECT ANY CHANGES IN KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF ITS HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE.

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