

**DISTRICT PLAN – LISTED HERITAGE PLACE
HERITAGE ASSESSMENT – STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE
HERITAGE ITEM NUMBER 701
*AKAROA LIGHTHOUSE AND SETTING -
BEACH ROAD, BETWEEN AYLERS VALLEY-HEMPLEMAN,
AKAROA***



PHOTOGRAPH : SIMON DAISLEY, 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 lighthouse is of high historical and social significance for its significant role in maritime safety for vessels entering or leaving Akaroa Harbour, it is however no longer in its original position having been moved to its current site in 1980. Construction began on April 23, 1878 on a site just to the east of Haylocks inlet. A road was blasted out of solid rock up to the lighthouse site - only 500 metres long it took 10 months to build. The lighthouse began operating on 1 January 1880 with the successful installation of a second order flashing white light. It was erected at the Akaroa Heads in response to the rough weather and unpredictable currents which often made the navigation of this stretch of water dangerous for early vessels who sought to visit the port town of Akaroa or seek safe harbour for vessels passing between Port Chalmers and Lyttelton that were caught out by storms. From 1909-1977 the lighthouse keepers also supplied the New Zealand Meteorological Service with updates on the weather at its original location at the Akaroa Heads. The lighthouse is of historical and social significance for its association with lighthouse keepers over time. Akaroa was initially one of the least popular stations with the keepers and was commonly referred to as the "penal" station. The first two keepers were Alexander Parks (Principal Keeper) and Martin Nelson (Assistant Keeper) and they operated the light working four hour shifts. The lighthouse station was also a Lloyds signal station and when ships arrived off the coast they

requested that their owners or agents be notified. Before the installation of telephone in 1885 the assistant keeper had to walk to Akaroa Township to make calls to agents and owners. The lighthouse also reflects changes in lighthouse technology over time as in 1977 an automatic light was installed in a new tower at the Akaroa Heads, bringing the era of lighthouse keepers to an end. In 1980 the Akaroa Lighthouse Preservation Society moved the lighthouse from the Akaroa heads to its present location and today it is open to the public to view.

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 lighthouse has cultural significance as it is associated with the very isolated and remote existence it provided for the lighthouse keepers in its original location. The original site housed the light keeper's and assistant light keeper's houses. There was limited road access to the lighthouse - steamers were used to bring supplies to the keepers until the 1950s when the Onuku Road had become capable of providing safer access.

This lighthouse has cultural significance for the local community efforts to retain and maintain it since it was decommissioned. The Lighthouse Preservation Society was established in 1978 to preserve the now redundant lighthouse and they relocated to its present location on Council road reserve in 1980. Much of the work was undertaken by volunteers from the local community and in 1981 the lighthouse was reopened for the public to view. It remains an Akaroa landmark and a destination for both visitors and locals.

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 lighthouse is of architectural significance as it conforms to a design which was commonly used for timber lighthouses in New Zealand in the nineteenth century. This design was formulated by John Blackett, an engineer. The main structure sits atop a plinth and is built from timber in a hexagonal form - it is 12.5 metres high and 5.49 metres wide at the base. This form tapers upwards until it reaches the lantern. The lighthouse is built in a hexagonal form which, along with those of the octagonal and square lighthouses, marked a departure from the traditional round lighthouses found in Great Britain in the nineteenth century. The exterior of the structure is weatherboard and the frame is of Australian hardwood with linings and weather boards of New Zealand Kauri. The walls are double skinned and were filled 2/3rds high with ballast to weigh the structure down to prevent it from being blown off the cliff. It has a copper dome. A hexagonal shaped deck surrounds the upper section of the tower. The deck is supported by carved brackets and further decorative brackets support the base upon which the lantern sits. The exterior of the structure remains free from any decoration apart from a single window above the ground door, and a second door which opens onto the deck. In 1980 the lighthouse was cut in half and transported to the new location where it was once again reassembled.

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 lighthouse is of technological and craftsmanship significance for its engineering, construction and the original lighting equipment it still houses. The mechanism was designed by the Scottish engineering firm D.T. & Stevenson & Co., and manufactured in Scotland. Stevenson and Co., also provided machinery to other lighthouses in New Zealand. The light was a second order dioptric holophotal revolving light, handmade in France and designed by Augustin Fresnel, a French physicist and lighthouse engineer. The light originally used a wick burner kerosene system, but in 1917 a Chand incandescent petroleum vapour kerosene burner was installed and in 1935 a kerosene powered generator was installed ending the task of winding up the clock mechanism. In 1951 a new powerhouse was built for the light to be run from a diesel powered generator with a 1000 watt electric system – the lighthouse was later connected to mains electricity. The lens, which is over 2 metres high and 1.5 metres in diameter, rotated by clockwork, driving 8 prisms around a central oil burning wick. The lens rotated in 80 seconds, giving a periodicity of 10 seconds to the flashes which was visible for 23 miles. The use of a second order lens caused the Akaroa lighthouse to differ from others built at the time which made use of either a first order lens (Cape Reinga lighthouse) or a third order lens (Cape Egmont). Due to its remoteness a telephone was installed as early as 1885 to allow for quick communication with Akaroa Township. It is also of technological and craftsmanship values and interest for its construction noting the walls are double skinned and were originally filled 2/3rds high with ballast to weigh the structure down to prevent it from being blown off the cliff.

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 lighthouse and setting are of high contextual significance due to its location and landmark status. The lighthouse, although relocated from its original remote site on the cliff at the Akaroa Heads, still retains a sense of its contextual significance as its relocation remains on a prominent section of the coastline along the Akaroa Harbour. As such, its current location reflects its original purpose. The lighthouse is an Akaroa landmark emphasised by its location, height and design. It relates in terms of marine related activities to other buildings and features along the Akaroa harbour coastline in Beach Road (including the Akaroa Rowing Clubrooms and boat house, Green's Point, Akaroa Wharf, the Weighbridge).

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 lighthouse has some archaeological value given its relocation. The archaeological significance is likely to be limited to built archaeology as thought the fact it was cut in two in 1980 may have reduced the potential this evidence it could provide. However due to the historic human activity in the vicinity including that which is pre 1900 it is possible that the wider site could be of archaeological significance.

ASSESSMENT STATEMENT

Akaroa lighthouse has high overall heritage significance to Christchurch and Banks Peninsula, despite its relocation in 1980, as an early structure reflecting maritime safety in Akaroa Harbour. The lighthouse is of high historical and social significance for its significant original role in maritime safety for vessels entering or leaving Akaroa Harbour. It is a tangible reminder of the need for this type of maritime safety measure. In 1980 the Akaroa Lighthouse Preservation Society moved the lighthouse from the Akaroa heads to its present location and today it is open to the public to view. The lighthouse has cultural significance as it is associated with the very isolated and remote existence it provided for the lighthouse keepers in its original location and it also has cultural significance for the local community efforts to retain and maintain it since it was decommissioned. The lighthouse is of architectural significance as it conforms to a design which was commonly used for timber lighthouses in New Zealand in the nineteenth century. This design was formulated by John Blackett, an engineer. The main structure sits atop a plinth and is built from timber in a hexagonal form. The lighthouse is of technological and craftsmanship significance for its engineering, construction and the original lighting equipment it still houses. The lighthouse, although relocated from its original remote site on the cliff at the Akaroa Heads, still retains high contextual significance as its relocation remains on a prominent section of the coastline along the Akaroa Harbour. The lighthouse and its setting are a prominent and recognised landmark feature of the township.

REFERENCES:

Christchurch City Council Heritage File – Akaroa Lighthouse, Beach Road, Akaroa
[HTTP://WWW.NEWZEALANDLIGHTHOUSES.COM/AKAROA.HTM](http://www.newzealandlighthouses.com/akaroa.htm)

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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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