

**DISTRICT PLAN – LISTED HERITAGE PLACE
HERITAGE ASSESSMENT – STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE
HERITAGE ITEM NUMBER 738
*FORMER LYTTELTON GAOL SITE – 26 OXFORD STREET,
LYTTELTON***



PHOTOGRAPH : CLARE KELLY, 2014

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 area of the former Lyttelton Gaol site that is listed has high historical and social significance for its former use as the gaol for the settlement from the establishment of Lyttelton until 1920, which also has links to the streets and walls constructed in Lyttelton through prison labour. It also has significance for its association with two former Provincial Architects – Benjamin Mountfort and Thomas Cane. In addition in later years the site has links to Dr Charles Upham, a notable and much loved figure in the town, with the erection on the site in 1953 of a clock tower as a memorial to him, designed by John Hendry, a well-known Christchurch architect.

The site was selected when Edward Jollie surveyed the future town in 1849 and the first gaol, a small wattle and daub 'lock-up', was built on it in 1851. In 1857 the architectural firm

of Mountfort and Luck designed the gaoler's house and police barracks on the site. By the early 1860s there were concerns about overcrowding on the site, although this was alleviated somewhat in 1863 by mentally ill inmates being transferred to the newly established Sunnyside Lunatic Asylum. Between 1871 and 1876 a new gaol, four times the size, was constructed and the site's boundaries extended. The first stage of the project was designed and supervised by Benjamin Mountfort. After 1877 Mountfort's successor as Provincial Architect, Thomas Cane, continued the extension and upgrading of the gaol. The architecture remained largely unaltered from 1880 until the last prisoners were moved to the newly established Paparoa Prison in 1920. During the time the prison existed in Lyttelton prison labour was used to build streets and walls throughout the town.

The complex was unable to be sold and eventually the buildings were systematically demolished with much of the rubble used as retaining materials by the Lyttelton Harbour Board. There is part of one small concrete block remaining on the upper north side of the former complex, against a large retaining wall. The site also retains several other concrete retaining walls and some steps that were internal to the site. Part has been converted to playing fields for the school. A rose garden has been established on the upper part of the site. The site also contains a clock tower, designed by architect John Hendry in 1952, which is a memorial to Lyttelton's Doctor Upham. Dr Upham was a surgeon and general practitioner who served Lyttelton for half a century. His work among poor families in the 1918 flu epidemic and the 1930s depression was particularly noteworthy.

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 site of the former Lyttelton Gaol has high cultural significance as a link to a particular form and type of penal institutions and treatment that reflected the established European societal mores and habits in the 19th century. It has cultural significance as part of the history of New Zealand's penal system. It also has significance through its links with penal reform, with the opposition to prison overcrowding throughout the 1860s and the objection to the housing of the mentally ill with other prisoners early in the same decade.

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 site of the former Lyttelton Gaol has architectural and aesthetic significance through its links to two Provincial Architects – Benjamin Mountfort and Thomas Cane – and for its links to John Hendry in the 1950s. In addition the remaining 19th century building, steps and retaining walls have architectural aesthetic significance as a physical example of 19th century gaol construction. The Charles Upham Memorial Clock has architectural and aesthetic significance as an example of modernist 1950s architecture by a well-known Christchurch architect.

The former buildings of the Lyttelton Gaol, designed by Benjamin Mountfort and constructed between 1871 and 1876 in concrete were notable for both the association with Mountfort and the use of concrete. The further development of the gaol until 1880 is associated with Thomas Cane. All that remains of the construction of the gaol between 1871 and 1880 is a

series of concrete retaining walls, a small concrete building, once two storey, now reduced to a single storey, which sits up in the rear, north part of the site and some steps that were internal to the site. The concrete building is a simple structure. At the western end is a single window, then there is a door, two further windows, another door, a fourth window, a third door and lastly a fifth window at the eastern end. The doors are simple, square headed openings while the windows have arched heads and are metal framed with nine lights, with the upper central light opening. At the western end of the building is a stair leading to what is now the roof. The north and east walls are formed by the retaining walls along the boundaries.

In addition the site now has a playing fields on it, a rose garden, a treed bank that is the division between the upper and lower parts of the site and the Charles Upham Memorial Clock. The Memorial Clock was designed by Christchurch architect John Hendry. Hendry was a foundation member of what was the National Historic Places Trust (now Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga), Chairman of the Trust's Regional Committee and a long-standing member of the Canterbury Pilgrims and Early Settlers Association. After his death in 1987 the Historic Places Trust (as it was then) set up the John Hendry Memorial Trust to assist in the conservation and restoration of listed historic buildings in Canterbury and to foster research into Canterbury's architectural history. The clock tower itself is a landmark of simple modern form, reflecting the functionalist thinking of the 1950s.

The site of the former Lyttelton Gaol has architectural and aesthetic significance through its links to two Provincial Architects – Benjamin Mountfort and Thomas Cane – and for its links to John Hendry in the 1950s. In addition the remaining 19th century building, steps and retaining walls have architectural aesthetic significance as a physical example of 19th century gaol construction. The Charles Upham Memorial Clock has architectural and aesthetic significance as an example of modernist 1950s architecture by a well known Christchurch architect.

The remainder of the gaol site, not listed, has been converted to a playground, a swimming pool and a skate park.

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 remaining 19th century block, steps and retaining walls have technological and craftsmanship significance for their use of unreinforced concrete and for what this may be able to reveal of 19th century construction methods.

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 former gaol site consists of an area which includes school playing fields fronting Oxford Street, a treed bank, internal steps, a formal rose garden, a memorial clock and the remnants of a 19th century single storey block. The site of the former Lyttelton Gaol has high contextual significance for its position as originally planned by Edward Jollie in 1849, for its relationship

with the historic streetscape of Oxford Street – elements of which were constructed by prison labour - and the Warder's House on the other side of the road. The remaining retaining walls, both within the listed site and external to it, are a physical reminder of the former use of the fact and that this use extended under areas that are now used by Lyttelton Main School and the general public. The site is a landmark.

In the immediate site itself the physical structures of the single storey block, the memorial clock and the steps now interrelate with playing fields, formal rose garden and a treed area which soften the starkness of the site. There are a series of interpretation plaques on the site relating to the former use of the site. It should be noted that following the Canterbury earthquakes the Charles Upham Memorial Clock has been fenced off and the area of garden around it has become overgrown. Work to repair the clock is currently being formulated.

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 site of the former Lyttelton Gaol is of archaeological significance because it has the ability 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. It is known that there are remnants of the former site beneath the school playing fields and elsewhere on the site.

ASSESSMENT STATEMENT

The former Lyttelton Gaol site is of overall high significance to Christchurch and Banks Peninsula for its former use as the gaol for the settlement from the establishment of Lyttelton until 1920, which also has links to the streets and walls constructed in Lyttelton through prison labour and for its more recent addition in 1953 of a clock tower as a memorial to Dr Charles Upham, a notable figure in the town. The area of the former Lyttelton Gaol site that is listed has high historical and social significance as a site that was selected when Edward Jollie surveyed the future town in 1849 and the first gaol, a small wattle and daub 'lock-up', was built on it in 1851 and with the later construction of the gaol between 1871 and 1880 and for its association with Dr Charles Upham, a notable and much loved figure in the town and to John Hendry, a well-known Christchurch architect. The site of the former Lyttelton Gaol has high cultural significance as part of the history of New Zealand's penal system and through its links with penal reform. The site of the former Lyttelton Gaol has architectural and aesthetic significance for its association with two former Provincial Architects – Benjamin Mountfort and Thomas Cane and for its links to architect John Hendry in the 1950s. In addition the remaining 19th century building, steps and retaining walls have architectural aesthetic significance as a physical example of 19th century gaol construction. The Charles Upham Memorial Clock has architectural and aesthetic significance as an example of modernist 1950s architecture by a well known Christchurch architect. The remaining 19th century block, steps and retaining walls have technological and craftsmanship significance for their use of unreinforced concrete. The site of the former Lyttelton Gaol has high contextual significance for its position as originally planned by Edward Jollie in 1849, for its relationship with the historic streetscape of Oxford Street – elements of which were constructed by prison labour - and the Warder's House on the other side of the road. It is also a landmark. The site of the former Lyttelton Gaol is of archaeological significance

because it has the ability to provide archaeological evidence relating to past building construction methods and materials, and human activity on the site,

REFERENCES:

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Rice, Geoffrey W., *Lyttelton: Port and Town. An Illustrated History* – 2004
Watson, James D., *The First 100 Years. Municipal Government in Lyttelton* - 1962

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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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