

**DISTRICT PLAN – LISTED HERITAGE PLACE  
HERITAGE ASSESSMENT – STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE  
HERITAGE ITEM NUMBER 747  
*ST PETER’S CHURCH AND SETTING – 10 RUE BALGUERIE,  
AKAROA***



**PHOTOGRAPH : JENNY MAY, 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.*

St Peter's Church has high historical and social significance as the Anglican Church, constructed in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century for the Anglican community of Akaroa. The first purpose built Anglican Church in Akaroa, built in 1852 in Church Street, was considered inadequate by the end of the 1850s. In 1861 John Watson, Resident Magistrate in Akaroa, granted the Anglican Church a parcel of Rural Section 200 in Rue Balguerie which he had purchased in from the Canterbury Association in 1851. It was on this site that the first stage of the current St Peter's Anglican Church was built in 1863. Research to date suggests that the church was designed by Arthur Guyon Purchas, a clergyman/architect who also designed the similar-looking St Stephen's, Tuahiwi, north of Christchurch. Purchas was known to have assisted Frederick Thatcher and Bishop Selwyn in the design of the Selwyn Churches. By the mid 1870s the church was considered too small and renowned Gothic Revival architect Benjamin Mountfort was commissioned to enlarge the building. In 1876 the addition of the chancel and transepts was completed, with the transept design by Messrs Kane and Drewett. The first vicar of 27 to date was the Rev W.J. Aylmer 1851-73 who with his wife and six children made "Glencarrigh" at 7 Percy Street, their home, during his 33 years in

Akaroa. The only female Vicar to serve at St Peter's was the Rev Diana Rattray (2001-2003) who became the Associate Dean of Christchurch Cathedral until 2008. The churchyard is notable for having only one grave, that of the Rev. E B Nevill. Nevill's brother was the first Bishop of Dunedin and decided that he should be buried there when he died in 1875. There was no vicar in Akaroa at the time so the Bishop decided where his brother would be buried, found a grave digger and then carried out the burial service. The following morning he left Akaroa and although two years later the vestry considered removing the body, they decided not to, but also decided that it should not set a precedent for further interment in the churchyard, hence it remains the only burial to this day. The church continues to function as the community's Anglican Church to the present day.

## **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.*

St Peter's Church has high cultural and spiritual significance due to its association with the history and on going religious practice of the Anglican Church in Akaroa. As the location of regular services as well as weddings, christenings and funerals the building has a high level of cultural and spiritual significance to the community.

## **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.*

St Peter's Church has high architectural and aesthetic significance due to its association with two architects prominent in the construction of New Zealand churches, Arthur Guyon Purchas and Benjamin Mountfort.

Mountfort trained as an architect in England under Richard Carpenter, an important member of the Gothic Revival movement. Mountfort immigrated to New Zealand in 1850 and became New Zealand's pre-eminent Gothic Revival architect. He has been credited with defining Christchurch's Gothic Revival character with a group of major buildings including the Canterbury Museum, the Provincial Council Buildings and Canterbury College (later the Arts Centre) and a number of early timber churches for the Anglican diocese.

The Rev. Dr Arthur Guyon Purchas had no formal training in architecture, but along with Bishop Selwyn and another clerical architect, Frederick Thatcher, devised the style of building known in New Zealand as the 'Selwyn Churches'. Between them the three clerical architects transplanted the ideas of the ecclesiologists in England to New Zealand and left an indelible mark on early ecclesiastical buildings in New Zealand.

The English Gothic Revival church bears a stylistic resemblance to the Selwyn churches in its vertical board and batten exterior, steeply pitched roof and exposed structure. The relative simplicity of the building is relieved by the repetition of paired lancet windows, a stepped lancet window to the west end and a bell tower comprised of three tapering sections. By 1875 the rectangular church was considered too small and plans were completed by Benjamin Mountfort in 1876 for the addition of a chancel and transepts, with the transept designed by Messrs Kane and Drewett. In 1982 a lounge addition was added to the southern elevation. The interior of the church has timber sarking throughout, timber roof construction

and a fine gallery at the western end. It contains a pipe organ, installed in 1869, and a variety of stained glass windows.

### **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.*

St Peter's Church has technological and craftsmanship significance as it demonstrates the use of local materials, and the board and batten methods of construction employed in ecclesiastical building in the early 1860s and mid 1870s. It also contains an organ, installed in 1869 by Richard West of Dunedin, that was imported from London and had a full mechanical action. The organ was restored in 1971 and transferred to electrical operation.

### **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 setting of St Peter's Church consists of the property title which has a garden setting with sloping lawn. The church has contextual significance as it sits on a prominent raised section of Rue Balguerie, visible from Rue Lavaud. The church building is part of a group of 19<sup>th</sup> century listed heritage buildings in this section of Rue Balguerie. Its position, style and the scale of the building give it landmark significance in the township.

### **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.*

St Peter's Church and setting are of 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 Anglican Church of St Peter's is of high overall significance to Christchurch including Banks Peninsula. The church has high historical and social significance as an early 1860s church that has remained in constant use as the centre of the Anglican community in Akaroa for over 150 years. St Peter's Church has high cultural and spiritual significance due to its association with the history and on going religious practice of the Anglican Church in Akaroa. St Peter's Church has high architectural and aesthetic significance due to its association with two architects prominent in the construction of New Zealand churches, Arthur Guyon Purchas and Benjamin Mountfort. St Peter's Church has high technological and craftsmanship significance as it demonstrates the use of local materials, and the board and

batten methods of construction employed in ecclesiastical building in the early 1860s and mid 1870s. St Peter's Church has contextual significance as it sits on a prominent raised section of Rue Balguerie, visible from Rue Lavaud. The church building is part of a group of 19<sup>th</sup> century listed heritage buildings in this section of Rue Balguerie. Its position, style and the scale of the building give it landmark significance in the township. St Peter's Church and setting are of 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, St Peter's Anglican Church – 10 Rue Balguerie, Akaroa*  
Daisley, Simon, *Background Information Listed Heritage Place, 10 Rue Balguerie*, 2013

**REPORT DATED:** 02/12/2014

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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