



**DISTRICT PLAN – LISTED HERITAGE PLACE
HERITAGE ASSESSMENT – STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE
HERITAGE ITEM NUMBER 460**

***NURSES' MEMORIAL CHAPEL AND SETTING –
2 RICCARTON AVENUE, CHRISTCHURCH***



PHOTOGRAPH: M. Vair-Piova 16/12/2014

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 Nurses' Memorial Chapel has high social and historical significance as New Zealand's first hospital chapel and only memorial dedicated to women who died in war or the 1918 influenza pandemic. Research also suggests that the building is the only purpose-built hospital chapel in the world which commemorates nurses who died in WWI.

The Chapel was constructed in 1927-1928 in memory of New Zealand nurses who died in the sinking of the WWI transport ship *Marquette* in the Aegean Sea in October 1915. Three of the nurses had trained at Christchurch Hospital. The Chapel also commemorates Christchurch Hospital nurses who died in the 1918 influenza epidemic. The foundation stone records it was laid by the Duchess of York (later Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother) in 1927. She was ill on the day however and unable to attend so the Duke of York (later George VI) did the honours.

The Chapel was threatened by the redevelopment of the Christchurch hospital site in the 1980s and 1990s, but was preserved following a concerted public campaign. Although superseded as the hospital's primary place of worship, the chapel found new life as a popular community facility. The building sustained damage in the Canterbury Earthquakes of 2010-11, and has remained closed since. In March 2014 ownership of the Chapel passed from the Canterbury District Hospital Board to the Christchurch City Council.

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 Nurses' Memorial Chapel has high cultural and spiritual significance as an inter-denominational place of worship and remembrance. It contains a number of individual memorials, but more generally commemorates nurses who gave their lives in WWI and the 1918 influenza epidemic. As the chapel of Christchurch Hospital, the building provided a place of spiritual contemplation for hospital patients and staff and was used for regular worship, baptisms, weddings and funerals. Although the Chapel was physically and administratively separated from the hospital after the site's redevelopment in the 1990s, many of these functions persisted until the Canterbury Earthquakes of 2010-2011.

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 Nurse's Memorial Chapel is of high architectural and aesthetic significance as a Tudor Gothic chapel with an Arts and Crafts interior, designed by John Goddard Collins of the prominent Christchurch architectural practice of Collins and Harman. J G Collins was the architect for many Christchurch Hospital buildings in the early twentieth century, of which the Chapel is now the only survivor.

The building is Tudor Gothic in style and constructed in polychromatic brickwork with a banded slate roof. The Arts and Crafts interior features extensive timberwork including a ceiling with arched trusses, wall panelling and a parquet floor. The timber contrasts vividly with a white Oamaru Stone chancel arch. The interior also incorporates wood carving from influential local carver and sculptor Frederick Gurnsey, and a significant collection of stained glass windows - some executed by leading English Arts and Crafts glass artist, Veronica Whall.

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 Nurses' Memorial Chapel has high technological and craftsmanship significance for the high quality of craftsmanship and finish evident in its construction and decoration. The chapel is particularly noted for its fine stained glass and woodcarving.

The Chapel's stained glass is a mix of historic glass sourced from the original St Mary's Church in Merivale, glass contemporary with the construction of the Chapel, and modern work. A number of the mid twentieth century windows were commissioned from leading English Arts and Crafts glass artist Veronica Whall. Canterbury has the largest collection of Whall's windows outside the United Kingdom. The Chapel's stained glass windows are considered to be among the best examples of the Arts and Crafts tradition in New Zealand.

The Chapel's fine wood carving was executed primarily in oak by gifted local carver and sculptor Frederick Gurnsey and/or his apprentice Jake Vivian between 1930 and 1956. The distinctive Arts and Crafts-inspired work of Gurnsey and Vivian graces many churches in the Canterbury diocese, as well as the Bridge of Remembrance.

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 Nurses' Memorial Chapel has contextual significance within its garden setting and as part of a broader hospital context. Historically the setting of the Chapel was as an attached wing of the main hospital building. It was accessed from the hospital's main corridor, and was largely surrounded by other buildings. This setting was entirely changed when the hospital buildings were replaced in the 1980s and 1990s. The present setting of the now freestanding building is a hemispherical area of garden between Riccarton Avenue and the hospital access road. This provides a buffer between the diminutive chapel and the bulk of the modern hospital complex – particularly the Women's' Hospital, which forms a solid backdrop. The building is a recognised landmark beside Riccarton Avenue and across from Hagley Park. The park contains a number of nearby listed heritage buildings and structures, including the Bandsmen's Memorial Band Rotunda and the Umpire's Pavilion.

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 Nurses' Memorial Chapel and its setting has archaeological significance because it has the potential to provide archaeological evidence relating to past construction methods and materials, and human activity on the site, including that which occurred prior to 1900. The wider site has been in hospital use since the 1860s.

ASSESSMENT STATEMENT

The Nurses' Memorial Chapel has high overall heritage significance to the Christchurch district including Banks Peninsula. The Chapel has high historical, social, cultural and spiritual significance as New Zealand's first hospital chapel - an inter-denominational place of worship and remembrance – and the country's only memorial dedicated to women who died in war or the 1918 influenza pandemic. The building is likely the only purpose-built hospital chapel in the world to commemorate nurses who died in WWI. The Chapel has high architectural, aesthetic and craftsmanship significance as a Tudor Gothic chapel with a distinguished Arts and Crafts interior, designed by J. G. Collins of the prominent Christchurch architectural firm of Collins and Harman. The interior contains fine wood carving from noted Christchurch sculptors Frederick Gurnsey and Jake Vivian, and an important collection of stained glass – the most noteworthy examples of which were executed by leading English Arts and Crafts glass artist, Veronica Whall. The Nurses' Memorial Chapel has contextual significance within its garden setting and as part of the broader hospital site. The Nurses'

Memorial Chapel and its setting has archaeological significance because it has the potential to provide archaeological evidence relating to past construction methods and materials, and human activity on the site, including that which occurred prior to 1900. The wider site has been in hospital use since the 1860s.

REFERENCES:

CCC Heritage files – Nurses Chapel

Christchurch City Council *The Architectural Heritage of Christchurch: 7. Nurses' Memorial Chapel* 1990

REPORT DATED: 12/02/2015

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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