

**DISTRICT PLAN – LISTED HERITAGE PLACE  
HERITAGE ASSESSMENT – STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE  
HERITAGE ITEM NUMBER 530  
*JUBILEE CLOCK TOWER AND SETTING – VICTORIA  
STREET, BETWEEN PETERBOROUGH STREET AND  
MONTREAL STREET/95 VICTORIA STREET,  
CHRISTCHURCH***



**PHOTOGRAPH:** M.VAIR-PIOVA, 11/12/2014

**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 Jubilee Clock Tower has high historical and social significance for its connection with provincial government in Canterbury and Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee. The clock and ironwork superstructure were originally commissioned for the Canterbury Provincial Government Buildings in 1859. On arrival from England, the superstructure was found to be

too heavy for its intended site. The ironwork was stored at the Provincial Government Buildings and then in the Christchurch City Council yards for nearly forty years.

In 1897 the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria's reign was celebrated in the city, and the superstructure and clock were grafted to a new stone base to create a memorial clock tower at the intersection of High, Lichfield and Manchester Streets. The increasing volume of traffic at this intersection resulted in a decision to relocate the tower to its present site in Victoria Street in 1930-1931. The clock tower has been extensively restored on at least three occasions: 1977-1978, 2003-2004 and following the Canterbury Earthquakes of 2010-2011. The clock tower sustained significant damage in the earthquakes and its bent finial became a popular post-earthquake image. The damaged clock tower was visited by HRH Prince Charles and the Duchess of Cornwall in 2012 in commemoration of Queen Elizabeth's Diamond Jubilee. The clock tower has been structurally strengthened and repaired and was reopened by Mayor Lianne Dalziel in October 2014.

### **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 Jubilee Clock Tower has high cultural significance as a public timekeeper and as a Diamond Jubilee memorial to Queen Victoria. At the time of its initial construction in the late nineteenth century, many citizens did not carry watches. Public clocks such as this therefore played an important role in timekeeping. The tower was erected to commemorate Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee, the sixtieth anniversary of her accession to the throne in 1837. Both plaques and carved ciphers on the tower commemorate this event. The tower serves to highlight the strong ties of family and patriotism that closely bound New Zealand and Britain in this period.

### **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 Jubilee Clock Tower has high architectural and aesthetic significance for its Gothic Revival design, the work of two significant local architectural practices, that of Benjamin Mountfort and Strouts and Ballantyne. It is also significant as part of Mountfort's original design for the Canterbury Provincial Government Buildings.

Benjamin Woolfield Mountfort (1825-98) trained as an architect in the office of the eminent Gothic Revivalist, Richard Carpenter. He arrived in Canterbury in 1850 and subsequently forged a career as New Zealand's pre-eminent Gothic Revival architect. Mountfort designed many religious buildings including the Trinity Congregational Church (1874), the Church of the Good Shepherd, Phillipstown (1884, now demolished), and the Christ Church Cathedral – where he made several major modifications to the original Scott design. He undertook many important commissions in the 1870s, including the Canterbury Museum (1869-82) and the Clock Tower Block at Canterbury College (1876-77). Mountfort introduced a number of High Victorian elements to New Zealand architecture, and was committed to the Gothic style with its honest use of materials and picturesque utility.

In 1857 Mountfort became first architect to the Province of Canterbury. In this capacity he designed the Canterbury Provincial Government Buildings in three stages from 1858 to 1865.

Mountfort's design for the first stage of the building (1859) was to include a delicate cast iron clock tower. This was manufactured but not erected.

In 1897 a design competition was held to select a stone base for the new Jubilee Clock Tower. The commission was awarded to the architectural practice of Strouts and Ballantyne. Frederick Strouts (1834-1919) trained in England before immigrating to New Zealand in 1859. He was elected an associate of the Royal Institute of British Architects in 1868 and was noted for his houses for the elite of Canterbury. Other commissions included the Canterbury Club (1873), Ivey Hall at Lincoln College, the Lyttelton Harbour Board building (1880) and the Rhodes Convalescent Home (1885-87, now demolished). Strouts had a brief partnership with his former pupil Robert Ballantyne before retiring from practice in 1905. The firm's design for the Jubilee Clock Tower was an open Gothic-arched arcade with an iron drinking fountain at its centre. Although the original base was demolished when the tower was relocated in 1930, the base which replaced it on the new Victoria Street site was very similar.

The clock tower was extensively restored in 1977-1978 when chimes were added to the clock mechanism, and then again in 2003-2004. During the extensive post-earthquake repair and restoration, the base was deconstructed and reconstructed in reinforced concrete with a stone veneer.

## **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 Jubilee Clock Tower has high technological and craftsmanship significance for the craftsmanship evident in both its cast iron and stone components and for it may reveal about masonry construction and Victorian iron work and materials as well as its capacity to reveal information about 21<sup>st</sup> structural strengthening technologies.

The clock tower superstructure was cast by founder Skidmore and Sons of Coventry to the design of Benjamin Mountfort, and sent out to New Zealand in 1860 in 142 packages. It is considered an internationally important piece of Gothic Revival ironwork. The base was reconstructed to its original design in 1930 and then again in 2013-14. It includes a variety of stones and extensive carving.

## **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 Jubilee Clock Tower has high contextual significance on its site, within its setting and as part of a wider context. The clock tower is centrally located on a small triangle at the intersection of Victoria, Salisbury and Montreal Streets. The setting is the immediate land parcel, which also contains low plantings. The context includes the adjacent heritage-listed Victoria Mansions, an Art Deco apartment block that provides a backdrop to the clock tower. The heritage-listed former Christchurch Teachers' College and Ironside House are also nearby. The location of the clock tower at a significant intersection, with a view shaft that

stretches north-west along Victoria Street into Papanui Road ensures that the clock tower is an important city landmark.

## **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 Jubilee Clock Tower and setting are of archaeological significance because they have potential to provide archaeological evidence relating to past construction methods and materials, and other human activity, including that which occurred before 1900. Victoria Street was a major thoroughfare and a centre of commercial and other activity in the early colonial period; the intersection of Victoria, Salisbury and Montreal Streets was built up by the 1870s.

## **ASSESSMENT STATEMENT**

The Jubilee Clock Tower has high overall heritage significance to the Christchurch district including Banks Peninsula. The tower has high historical and social significance for its association with the Canterbury Provincial Government, and as a Jubilee memorial to Queen Victoria. The tower has high cultural significance as a public timekeeper and as a symbol of New Zealand's loyalty to Queen and Empire. The tower is of high architectural and aesthetic significance as part of the original design of the Provincial Government Buildings, and as a notable Gothic Revival design by architects B. W. Mountfort and Strouts and Ballantyne. The Jubilee Clock Tower has high technological and craftsmanship significance for the craftsmanship evident in both its cast iron and stone components and for it may reveal about masonry construction and Victorian iron work and materials as well as its capacity to reveal information about 21<sup>st</sup> structural strengthening technologies. The tower has high contextual significance as a major city landmark marking the northern approach to the central city, and as part of a cluster of surviving heritage structures around a busy intersection. The Jubilee Clock Tower and setting are of archaeological significance because they have potential to provide archaeological evidence relating to past construction methods and materials, and other human activity, including that which occurred before 1900.

## **REFERENCES:**

CCC Heritage files - Victoria Clock Tower

Historic place # 3670 – Heritage NZ List  
<http://www.heritage.org.nz/the-list/details/3670>

*The Press* 9 July 1929, p.10.

*The Press* 15 December 1997.

Ian Lochhead *A Dream of Spires: Benjamin Mountfort and the Gothic Revival* Christchurch, 1999

<http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/interactive/32542/memorials-to-queen-victoria>

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