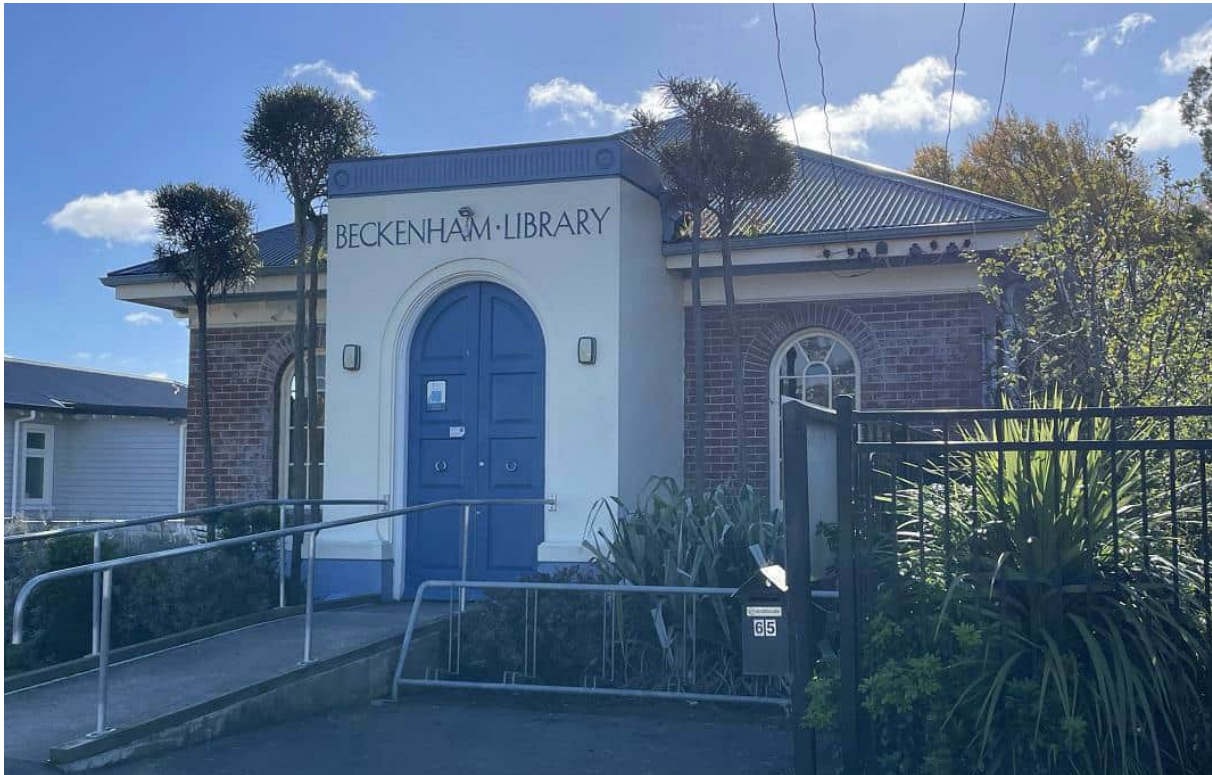


**CHRISTCHURCH DISTRICT PLAN – SCHEDULED HERITAGE PLACE
HERITAGE ASSESSMENT – STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE
HERITAGE ITEM NUMBER 1349
*FORMER BECKENHAM LIBRARY AND SETTING - 65
SANDWICH ROAD, CHRISTCHURCH***



PHOTOGRAPH : CHRISTCHURCH CITY COUNCIL 2024

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 Beckenham Library building is of historical and social significance on account of its genesis at the instigation of the local community (The Beckenham Burgesses Association). A Beckenham Library was operating from 1929, and a request to Council for a site and purpose built library building resulted in the Beckenham Library building opening in Sandwich Road in 1931. The building has a strong historical connection with the people in the community who were instrumental in its establishment and the many volunteers who operated the library.

The Beckenham Burgesses Association was active from as early as 1905 and took a leading role in developing many facilities and services in the area. The aim of the association was "to further the interests of the district and to assist the City Council in its municipal duties." The Association lobbied the Council for land and a building for a library for the suburb and by September 1928 just over 14 perches in Sandwich Road next to the Beckenham School was

secured by the Council for this purpose. The Christchurch City Council provided the money for the new building which was opened by the Mayor, Mr D.G. Sullivan on 12.8.1931 and included a small newspaper room and librarian's office, shelving on the walls and moveable island shelves, movable newspaper benches and desks. At the time of its opening the library housed 1800 volumes.

The building illustrates a phase of activity from the 1860s onwards, and particularly in the early to mid 20th century, when local communities were establishing their own libraries and once established, lobbying the Council to provide sites and new buildings to house these suburban volunteer operated libraries. This trend left the city with a number of small library buildings in Council ownership, many of which still operated as volunteer libraries prior to the Canterbury earthquakes. The building is of historical and social significance as one of the few surviving tangible reminders of this aspect of the history of Christchurch's libraries which is unique in New Zealand. In 1875 Christchurch had 5 suburban libraries, and by 1963 there were 18 in operation. The Beckenham library was one of a number of Council built and owned, and volunteer-operated suburban libraries in the city in the late 19th and early 20th century, including St Albans, Woolston, St Martins, Waltham and Opawa, the aforementioned buildings all having been demolished following the Canterbury earthquakes.

People connected with the history of the former Beckenham Library include W.T. Brown who served as secretary for 21 years and retired in 1968 and William Kennedy who retired after 14 years as president in 1967. Women were essential to the running of the library during the war years. By 1951 there were 8150 books and 195 members. In 1993 the library continued to be run by a group of volunteers. In 2003, the year in which the new Beckenham library, South Library, opened, a toy library started in the former Beckenham Library building, which continued there until the Canterbury earthquakes forced the building's closure. In 2016 the Opawa St Martins Toy Library was able to return to the repaired and strengthened building.

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 library is of cultural significance for its role in the community over time. It was highly valued by the local community for the service it provided when it operated as a library in the past and as a toy library in more recent times. As a suburban library located within the community it served, the Beckenham library building reflects the way in which people lived locally in the first half of the 20th century. It also reflects a 'do it yourself' culture in which local residents were highly active in their local communities, to the extent of providing desired services themselves rather than relying on local bodies to fulfil this role.

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.

Built in 1931, the Beckenham Library building is of architectural and aesthetic significance as a compact aesthetically pleasing brick structure with restrained architectural detailing. The main face with its prominent central entrance porch, with a round-headed entrance door and flanking round-headed mullioned windows is a key feature. Architecturally the building fits

into the idiom of Council designed suburban libraries, substations and pumphouses of the 1920s-30s. The library is a good representative example of the body of work of Christchurch City Council Assistant Architect, Victor Hean, particularly in light of the loss or damage to his other buildings in the city due to the Canterbury earthquakes. Hean (1901-1979) was born and educated in Christchurch, and was employed at the Christchurch City Council from 1925-1936 as an architectural assistant and draughtsman. He produced strongly classical work such as the Edmonds' Band Rotunda and the Carlton Mill Bridge, as well as the streamlined Art Deco exterior of the MED Building, Manchester Street, completed in 1939 (demolished). The Beckenham Library building was noted at the opening in September 1931 to be 'specially strengthened to resist earthquakes' (The Press 4.8.1931 p.4).

Alterations to the building have been minor. In September 1955 the rear wall of the library was demolished and a 300 square foot addition housing kitchen facilities was built in the same design as the original. This has had very little effect on the architectural values of the building. The removal of the original entrance steps and installation of a ramp with handrails has detracted somewhat from the aesthetics of the entrance. Two lamps which originally flanked the entrance have since been replaced with lamps of modern design. In 2003 the shelves were covered over with hard board to enable a toy library to use the building. This work was designed to be reversible. The Marseilles tiled roof was replaced with corrugated iron in 2010. In 2016 work to strengthen and repair the building following the Canterbury earthquakes was completed.

The whole interior of the building has heritage significance including the layout and spaces, structure and linings, fixtures, hardware, materials and finishes. An overview of the interior heritage fabric is included at the end of this document.

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 building is of technological and craftsmanship significance as it illustrates an attention to detail and a good standard of materials and construction for its time designed by a local authority architect, to resist earthquakes. The craftsmanship is evident in the incised plasterwork of the entrance porch, the brickwork, particularly around the arched windows, and the timber joinery on the interior.

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 Beckenham Library building and setting is of contextual significance for its location and relationship to the street. It directly relates to Sandwich Road with a slight setback from the street and uninterrupted approach to the prominent main entrance. The building is located adjacent to the school which is a prominent part of the community. It relates to its domestic neighbours in terms of its materials, design and small scale (single storey). The library forms part of a group of small Council buildings such as libraries, pumphouses and substations,

built in the 1920s and 30s by the Christchurch City Council architect's office in similar materials, scale and design aesthetic.

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 building and setting is of archaeological significance for the potential evidence it may hold of human activity on the site including that which predates 1900. Historic Māori activity and European farming activity may have occurred in the area, therefore there is a possibility that pre-1900 evidence remains.

ASSESSMENT STATEMENT

The Beckenham Library including the whole interior and setting, is of overall significance to the Christchurch District, including Banks Peninsula. It is of historical and social significance for its associations with the Beckenham Burgesses Association and the Christchurch City Council, the history of volunteer involvement in its operation, and long history of continued community use. It reflects historical processes in the city, in particular, the way in which a number of suburban services in the city came about, and it is one of few early 20th century suburban library buildings remaining in the city. It is of cultural value for its use over time, providing educational and recreational reading material to the community. It is of architectural, technological and craftsmanship value due to its Victor Hean design and materials, and its shared architectural idiom with other Council built suburban libraries and utility buildings of the period. It is also of contextual significance due to its location and relationship to the local area. The building and setting is of archaeological significance for the potential evidence it may hold of human activity on the site including that which pre-dates 1900.

REFERENCES:

Christchurch City Council Heritage files

Beckenham Neighbourhood Association, Beckenham A Suburb of Christchurch, New Zealand, 1993.

National Archives, Acc. 479, Christchurch City Council, Item BU/12/10, Beckenham Library 1956 – 74; Acc. 344, Beckenham Library Extensions; 17 September 1956. Extract from report of the Baths and Library Committee; 20 August 1956, Memo to City Engineer.

CPL 2000/29, Folder 'Neil Fitzgerald, Beckenham Library' 1951 – 1984.

The Press: 18 May 1923, p.4; 17 May 1930, p.17; 3 June 1930, p.9; 2 September 1930, p.8; 14 April 1931, p.8; 12 September 1931, p.17; 14 September 1931, p.4; 28 September 1951, p.10; 16.3.1963 p. 8; 1 November 1968, p.7; 30 September 1971, p.18.

REPORT DATED: FEBRUARY 2014

UPDATED: DECEMBER 2021

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.

PLEASE USE IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE CHRISTCHURCH CITY COUNCIL HERITAGE FILES.

INTERIOR HERITAGE FABRIC OVERVIEW

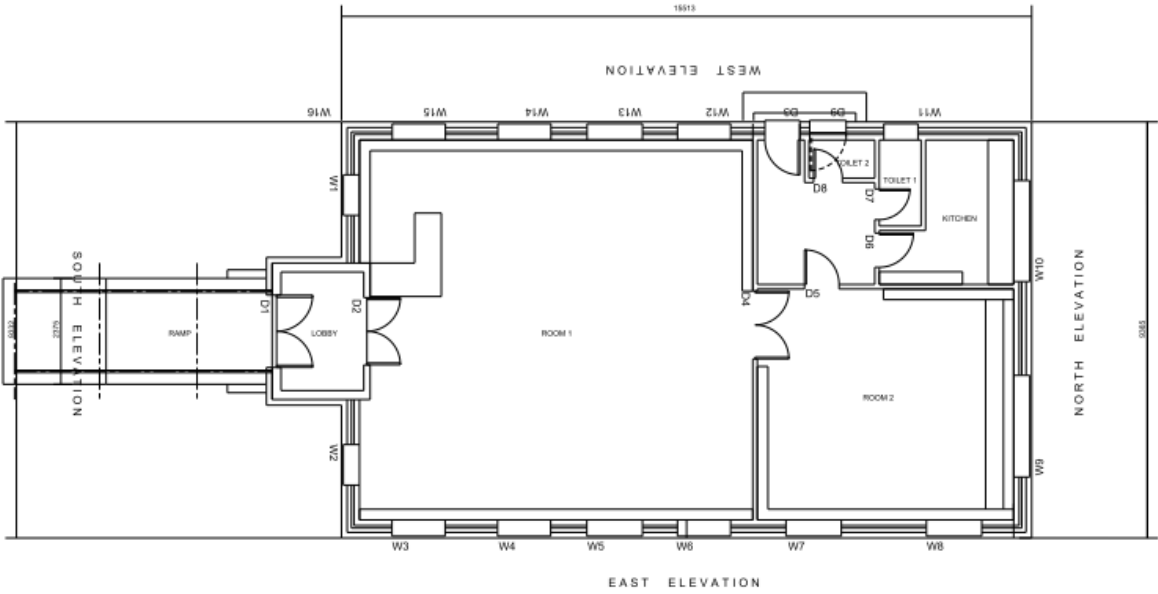
Unless otherwise stated, the items listed below include all features noted e.g. G-7 cornices includes all cornices in that space

Date compiled: 2016

Location	Heritage Fabric
Building Structure	Roof structure Ground floor Structure Wall structure
Lobby	Form Plastered brick walls Painted tongue and groove ceiling Timber cornice Concrete floor Paired glazed interior doors with cage panels attached, push plates, chrome handles and latch External timber doors with lock Light switches in glazed cabinet Gas lamp over doors with glass Cornice fitting for light in ceiling
Space 1: Library	Form Plastered brick walls Timber wall at north end Plaster cornice Timber flooring Internal doors with timber architrave to lobby (see above features of doors) Timber architrave to rear room (extension) Two arched casements Casements with painted timber architraves and joinery Built-in timber shelving around perimeter of room Timber skirting on north wall Two gas light fittings in ceiling Light switches in glazed cabinet Clock above north doorway
Space 2: Rear room (1955 extension)	External walls plastered brick Internal timber walls Timber architrave to Library Window casements with timber architraves Internal 1950s door to cloak room with handle
Toilets/cloak room	Cornice Dado with rail Internal 1950s door with handle to rear room Timber louvres in toilet and architrave Bakelite light switches Power board with hinges Window above external door with architrave
Kitchen	Casement with winder and timber joinery and

	architrave Bakelite light switch
--	-------------------------------------

Plans



Source: St Martins Opawa Toy Library, 65 Sandwich Road, Plan & Elevations, Malcolm Kitt, CCC Technical Services & Design, 2015/2016.