DISTRICT PLAN – LISTED HERITAGE PLACE
HERITAGE ASSESSMENT – STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE
HERITAGE ITEM NUMBER 602

NEW BRIGHTON CLOCK TOWER AND SETTING – 213, 213R
MARINE PARADE, CHRISTCHURCH

PHOTOGRAPH: M VAIR-PIOVA, 2015

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 New Brighton Clock Tower has historical and social significance for its association with the Green family and as an instance of civic philanthropy. The settlement of New Brighton began in the 1860s and by the early 1870s it was recognised as a visitor destination. The 1887 opening of a tram route from Cathedral Square to New Brighton encouraged residential development and facilitated visitor access in the area. As a result the foreshore became built up with shops and hotels. The New Brighton Clock Tower was donated by Richard Green in 1934 in memory of his father Edmund Green. Green senior was an early settler who arrived in 1859 with his family after gaining free passage to New Zealand from England in order to establish the first electric telegraph system. He was sponsored by J E Fitzgerald, the Canterbury Emigration Agent and first Superintendent of the Canterbury Provincial Council.
Richard Green, a retired builder (1853-1938), also donated funds for the Scarborough Clock Tower and the Fitzgerald Statue on Rolleston Avenue in 1934. The foundation stone for the New Brighton clock was laid by the Mayoress of New Brighton, Miss I A M Leaver, in December 1934 and the tower was officially opened in September 1935 with a large crowd in attendance. In the 1980s the open tower base was closed in due to vandalism. In 1996 the interior and exterior underwent alterations, and the base of the tower was adapted for use as an information centre. These changes were reversed in 2000 during restoration of the tower by Christchurch City Council. The tower sustained minor damage in the 2010/2011 Canterbury earthquakes. Corrosion of the reinforcing bars and some spalling of the concrete is unrelated to the earthquakes and arises from the age of the structure.

**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 New Brighton Clock Tower has cultural significance as an example of the civic philanthropy that has endowed the city with a large numbers of buildings, monuments, and public artworks over many years. It commemorates the contribution Edmund Green made to the city and reflects the way of life of the Depression-era unemployment relief workers who worked on this construction project.

**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 New Brighton Clock Tower has architectural and aesthetic significance for its design by local architect and structural engineer B J Ager. Born in Ashburton, Benjamin Ager (1875-1959) was the son of an architect and worked for Peter Graham as a carpenter in Christchurch before going to London for several years. After returning to New Zealand he went into private practice in 1912. Ager had a long career and his oeuvre includes St Elmo Courts on the corner of Montreal and Hereford Streets (1929, demolished) and the 1928 Road Service Bus Station in Victoria Street, which was demolished to make way for the Christchurch Casino. Ager’s original design for the clock tower, published in November 1934, was for a masonry tower built from random rubble stone.

The Clock Tower is in a Stripped Classical style, approximately three storeys in height with a rectangular footprint. Fluted corner piers frame the base of the tower, into which is set an arched entrance decorated with a barley-twist motif. The same motif is repeated over at the corner of the piers and at the parapet level beneath the dome. The donor himself expressed his thoughts on the clock tower’s aesthetic and architectural qualities by stating ‘...in deciding upon a clock tower as a useful gift, I was actuated by the motive of combining beauty, permanence and utility’. A clock face is set within each elevation and from its inception it was intended the tower would be lit at night.

**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 clock tower has technological and craftsmanship significance for its robust reinforced concrete construction and the quality of its cast decorative embellishments. The successful tenderer for the project was the Conlyn Importing and Construction Company. A 1935 report in the Press noted that the clock was of the best quality obtainable and was imported from England.

**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 New Brighton Clock Tower and its setting have contextual significance for its prominent axial position on Marine Parade, in between New Brighton Mall and the New Brighton Library and Pier. It is a landmark structure by virtue of its location, height and function and makes an important contribution to the streetscape of Marine Parade. It is also part of a group of commemorative structures gifted to the city by Richard Green, along with the Scarborough Clock Tower and Fitzgerald Statue. The setting consists of the area of road reserve on which the tower stands. Prior to the construction of the new New Brighton Library in 1999 the clock tower had greater visual impact on the eastern/seaward side.

**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 New Brighton Clock Tower and its setting is of archaeological significance because it has the potential to provide archaeological evidence relating to human activity on the site, possibly including that which occurred before 1900.

**ASSESSMENT STATEMENT**

The New Brighton Clock Tower and its setting has overall significance to Christchurch, including Banks Peninsula. The Clock Tower has historical and social significance as a memorial gift in recognition of Edmund Green by his son Richard. The structure has cultural significance as an instance of civic philanthropy and for its association with the way of life of relief workers during the Depression. The New Brighton Clock Tower has architectural and aesthetic significance for its Stripped Classical design by architect B J Ager. The clock tower has technological and craftsmanship significance for its robust reinforced concrete construction and the quality of its cast decorative embellishments. It has contextual significance as a prominent landmark on Marine Parade and in relation to the New Brighton Mall, New Brighton Library and the New Brighton Pier. The New Brighton Clock Tower and its setting is of archaeological significance because it has the potential to provide
archaeological evidence relating to human activity on the site, possibly including that which occurred before 1900.

REFERENCES:

Christchurch City Council Heritage files Marine Parade, New Brighton Clock Tower
CCC Detailed Engineering Evaluation – Qualitative and Quantitative Report – New Brighton Clock Tower September 2012
Richard Greenaway ‘Barbadoes Street Cemetery Tour’ June 2007
Ruru Lawn Cemetery Tour

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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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