

HALCOMBE MEMORIAL HALL – 75 Willoughby Street, Halcombe



Architect: Unknown

Construction date: 1935-36

Visible materials: Timber cladding & joinery, steel roof

Architectural style: Inter-war war free style

Use/building type: Community

Date and Compiler: Ian Bowman, 2014, Val Burr 2019

Heritage New Zealand listing: Nil

Proposed category: B

PHYSICAL AND SOCIAL HISTORY

The book *Pioneering to Prosperity: A Centennial History of the Manchester Block* (p. 82) provides some basic information on the history of community halls in Halcombe: “The old hall was originally a large barn, the stage and dressing rooms being added at a later date. Kerosene lamps were used for lighting until carbide gas lighting subsequently was installed, but this did not prove an entirely satisfactory arrangement because the more high-spirited element among the population would go outside and turn off the gas taps when the artistic talent of the entertainers was not fully appreciated. Mrs Managh was responsible for the building of the new hall, which was served with electricity to mark the Silver Jubilee of King George V.”¹

Background of the site

The site where the hall stands appears to have previously been associated with a store. Certificate of Title WN9/208, which charts the section’s history to the present, was originally issued in 1877 to Henry Burrell, a carpenter of Halcombe. In 1882, the property was transferred to James Alfred Tompkins, a storekeeper of Halcombe.

An idea of the type of trading activity apparently taking place at the site in Tompkins’ time can be gleaned from an article in the *Feilding Star* of 17 June 1882 (p. 2): “Cheese-making at Halcombe is

¹ D. A. Davies & R. E. Clevely, *Pioneering to Prosperity: A Centennial History of the Manchester Block 1874-1974* (Feilding, 1981), p. 82

being made a speciality by Mr Fergusson of that township. He forwarded a ton a few days ago to Wellington to his correspondents there. The price obtained was equal to retail prices at Halcombe. We had the pleasure of sampling some grand cheeses, weighing upwards of 40 lbs each, at the store of Mr Tompkins; and found the quality very superior. We have no doubt that in a very few years this district will be as famous as Canterbury for this product. Mr Tompkins sent away a ton of butter last week from Halcombe. He has about twelve or fourteen dairy farmers supplying him, so that every possible encouragement is given them to produce as much as possible for foreign markets.”

The property was transferred to Henry Samson and John Tompkins as joint tenants in May 1884, and then on 16 June 1885 (p. 2), the *Feilding Star* reported that: “*The funeral of the late Mr James A. Tompkins, at Sanson, on Friday, was attended by about 500 persons, who came from all parts of Manawatu and Rangitikei to give a last testimony of their respect for the deceased. The burial service was read by the Rev. Mr Simmonds. Two beautiful wreaths were placed on the coffin.*”²

The Certificate of Title records that in April 1887, the property was transferred to Ann Tompkins, widow of James Tompkins. This entry was followed by a Notice of Marriage, which recorded that Ann Tompkins had married Austin Carter Burcham, a farmer, at Halcombe in 1 September 1887.³ Burcham, with Arthur Henry Tompkins and others, was a co-owner of the Waverley-based flaxmilling firm ‘A. Nannestad & Co.’, a firm that had connections to timber milling in the Manawatu.⁴ Ann Burcham died on 25 March 1925.⁵

Meanwhile, in 1920, the property had been transferred to Harriet Matthews (nee Quarrie), wife of Albert Matthews, a farmer of Sandon, the couple having married in 1908.⁶ When Harriet’s father, James Quarrie, died in August 1916, Harriet and her husband were farming at Mt. Stewart.⁷ The Quarries were an old Halcombe family. The reason why she bought this property, and what was then located on it, are uncertain so far as this study is concerned.⁸ However, Harriet’s brother, John Quarrie, had died in December 1919, leaving five young children, whose mother had previously died in the 1918 Influenza Epidemic.⁹

In 1935 the property was transferred to Amelia Henrietta Managh, described as a widow, of Halcombe, and it was she who had this hall erected.

The New Hall

While the actual official opening’ date for the new hall was not discovered during this study (only an array of Feilding-focused *Feilding Star* clippings preserved in scrapbooks survive from that time), it was certainly in use by mid-March 1936. At that time the Halcombe Women’s Institute held their Annual Meeting there - the hall’s name then being the ‘Jubilee Hall.’¹⁰

² *Feilding Star*, 16 June 1885, p. 2

³ Births, Deaths & Marriages online: <https://www.bdmonline.dia.govt.nz/>: Ref: 1887/381

⁴ *Wanganui Herald*, 27 February 1890, p. 3 (Dissolution of partnership notice)

⁵ *Evening Post*, 26 March 1925, p. 2; *Poverty Bay Herald*, 14 May 1925, p. 1(5)

⁶ Births, Deaths & Marriages online: <https://www.bdmonline.dia.govt.nz/>: Ref: 1908/8288; *Wanganui Chronicle*, 8 December 1908, p. 2

⁷ *Rangitikei Advocate and Manawatu Argus*, 15 August 1916, p. 4

⁸ The book *Halcombe School, 1877-1977* (p. 5) records that a saddlery shop had once been there, and later a house.

⁹ *Rangitikei Advocate and Manawatu Argus*, 5 January 1920, p. 4

¹⁰ *Feilding Star*, 19 March 1936, in the *Feilding Star Scrapbook*: Between 1st June 1935 and 30th May 1936: <http://feildingphotos.mdc.govt.nz/nodes/view/18530#idx21867>

The hall had been named in honour of King George V's Silver Jubilee. Official celebrations of this event took place internationally between the 6th and 12th May 1935 – and this coincides with the time of the purchase of the hall's site.¹¹

Possibly another incentive for Amelia Managh deciding to build the hall when she did was the upcoming wedding of her daughter. Accordingly, the *Lake Wakatip Mail* of 11 August 1936 (p. 5) reported on the wedding at Halcombe, held on 29th July 1936, of Richmond Ingles and Lilian Dorothy Managh, daughter of Mrs and the late Mr C. Managh. The bride's twin sister, Miss Ivy Managh was the bridesmaid. "After the ceremony, a large number of guests were entertained in the Jubilee hall, where the wedding breakfast was set out..."

The booklet *Halcombe School and District: Diamond Jubilee, 1877-1937* (p. 15) describes the public facilities then in the town. These included the new hall: "There is an excellent public building, the Jubilee Hall, which was erected by Mrs C. Managh, a very old identity, to commemorate the Silver Jubilee of the late King George V. The erection of this hall spelt finish to the old hall, but the enterprising owner, Mr J. Heapey, an original settler, now presides over his three billiard tables. The young men of the village consider this (i.e. the old hall) the most important public facility of all."

The *Feilding Star* of 19 March 1937 referred to Halcombe School's diamond jubilee that was held in mid-March 1937. This stated that a luncheon was being held at the Jubilee Hall during the event.¹²

There is some information on the history of the hall that claims that it was originally intended as a picture theatre, and that kerosene lamps were used for lighting until carbide gas lighting was installed. However, it appears more likely that at least some of that applied to the previous hall, with the book *Pioneering to Prosperity: A Centennial History of the Manchester Block* (p. 82) stating that the new hall had electricity from the start.



Figure 1 Amelia Henrietta Managh (nee Schwass) – from an Ancestry.com index webpage that shows her with three of her granddaughters. Ref: https://www.ancestry.com.au/genealogy/records/amelia-henrietta-schwass_131601604?geo_a=r&geo_s=us&geo_t=au&geo_v=2.0.0&o_iid=41019&o_lid=41019&o_sch=Web+Property

Amelia Managh

Amelia Henrietta Magdalena Schwass had been born at Upper Moutere, near Nelson, on 8th August 1861.¹³ Her parents, Ernest Heinrich and Annie Sophia Rose Schwass, were German immigrants. They

¹¹ Brockham Historic Village: The Silver Jubilee of King George V and Queen Mary 1935 <http://www.brockhamhistory.org/events/the-silver-jubilee-of-king-george-v-and-queen-mary-1935/>

¹² *The Feilding Star Scrapbook*: Between 1st March 1937 and 25th February 1938 <http://feildingphotos.mdc.govt.nz/nodes/view/18532#idx21983>

¹³ Births, Deaths & Marriages online: <https://www.bdmonline.dia.govt.nz/>, Ref: 1861/9630. Note that some references say she was born on 8 August 1860, however, the BDM website indicates that she was born on 8 August 1861 – which

had then moved their family to Halcombe in the 1870s – at a time when the district had a significant German population.

On 3rd February 1880, Amelia married Charles Managh. He had been born in County Tyrone, Ireland, and had migrated to New Zealand in 1875. The couple were to have eighteen children (five boys and twelve girls), the last two being twin girls born in 1908. Of all these children, they lost only one - a son named Clement who died in 1883 aged 18 months, having drowned in a creek. Charles Managh died at his home, Mangaone Downs, Halcombe, on 7 December 1918 after a long illness.¹⁴

The Feilding Express, of 9 August 1941, gave some useful background to the origins of the hall – under the heading: *Unique 80th. Birthday Celebration Mrs Amelia Managh, of Halcombe, Honoured by her Descendants*

“What must be a unique occasion in many ways in the history not only of this district but of New Zealand was a birthday celebration held at Halcombe last night when the family of Mrs Amelia Managh combined in honouring her 80th birthday. One unusual feature was that the celebrations took place in the Jubilee Hall, a building owned by Mrs Managh and built by her because so many of her family reside in the district and so that the people of Halcombe, among whom she has lived for nearly seventy years, should have a suitable place in which to gather. More unusual, and very wonderful, was the fact that of the sixteen children reared by Mrs Managh, fifteen of them were present, there being five sons and 10 daughters, most of whom reside in the district, but there were descendants present from as far away at the North Auckland district and her youngest son came from Invercargill.

“Sixty-five descendants, included among whom were 22 grandchildren and three great grandchildren, gathered at a family tea in the Hall, where a two-tiered birthday cake made by a daughter, Mrs J.L. Fergusson, and decorated by another daughter, Mrs L. Anderson, held pride of place. A flashlight photograph was taken of this family group.

“Later in the evening the Hall was packed with friends and relatives at a happy social evening when dancing, games and vocal items were the entertainment, Mrs R. Managh and R. Flavell being the M.C.’s. During the evening Mrs Managh was the recipient of a presentation from her family of a brass fire screen and an electric kettle, the eldest son, Mr Edward Managh making the presentation and voicing appreciation of his brothers and sisters of their wonderful parent, and the esteem in which they held her. Floral tributes and many letters and telegrams of congratulation from all parts of New Zealand were also received by Mrs Managh. Supper was arranged and served by the daughters and pieces of the birthday cake were handed round, and the happy party ended at a late hour.”¹⁵

The Feilding Express, of 7 August 1946, then described another Managh family celebration for which the hall served as the venue: *Birthday Celebration, Lady’s 85th Anniversary Marked by family gathering*

“On Saturday last a most interesting birthday party was celebrated at Halcombe on the occasion of the 85th birthday of Mrs A. Managh, of ‘Reyton Villa,’ a resident who is held in the highest respect and esteem. All but three of the 60 guests were descendants and ‘in-laws.’ The eleven daughters of Mrs Managh were present, this being the first reunion since they met fourteen years ago when the twelve sisters were present, but one of them has since passed away. Three sons were present on Saturday, one coming from Te Puke and another from Invercargill, two others being absent.

“A most sumptuous sit-down high tea was provided by the family and was set in the supper room of the hall. The good fare was enjoyed and toasts in honour of the chief guest were drunk. A beautiful birthday cake made by a daughter, Mrs Fraser, of Invercargill, graced the table.

corresponds with her subsequent birthday celebration dates. The online BDM reference also has her name referred to as ‘Emma Henrietta Magdalena Schwass’

¹⁴ ‘Charles Managh & Amelia Henrietta Schwass, Halcombe’: <http://www.familytreecircles.com/charles-managh-amelia-henrietta-schwass-halcombe-68773.html>

¹⁵ *The Feilding Express Scrapbook*: Between 1st August 1940 and 30th April 1942
<http://feildingphotos.mdc.govt.nz/nodes/view/18524#idx21469>

“After tea the tables were cleared away and a jolly evening was spent, a blazing fire adding to the cheery warmth, Mr Rex Flavall, a grandson, being M.C. The grandchildren numbering 25 were pleasantly occupied in playing games and there were musical items.

“Mrs Managh enjoys good health and though she has reached such a great age, still does all her own housework. Until this year she also tended her garden, but she no longer performs this labour of love.”¹⁶

Amelia eventually died at Halcombe on 8th January 1958, aged 97. She, her husband, and their little boy who drowned, are buried together at Halcombe Cemetery.

The Halcombe Memorial Hall

By the time Amelia died, the hall had a new owner and a new name. The Certificate of Title records, on an entry dated 3 November 1950, that the property was being transferred to the Chairman, Councillors and Inhabitants of the County of Oroua. The successor to the Oroua County Council – Manawatu District Council – remains its current owner.

The book *Halcombe School 1877-1977* (p. 7) records that in 1948 arrangements had begun to be made to raise money to purchase the Jubilee Hall from Mrs Managh as a memorial to local men killed in the war. *“The hall had to be vested in the County to receive the one pound for one pound subsidy from the Government and to ensure the continuity of ownership. So in 1950 the hall was purchased and renamed the Halcombe Memorial Hall.”¹⁷*

Thus in 1950 the hall became the Halcombe Memorial Hall, in memory of the local men lost in both wars, but primarily those lost in the Second World War. The dates “1939 - 1945” are painted on its upper façade. It will almost certainly have been one of the 347 community centre projects undertaken around the country after WWII using a Government subsidy whereby funds were put into ‘useful’ memorials to the war dead, instead of into more stone war memorials like those created after WWI.¹⁸

The Manawatu District Council advertises the hall as consisting of the main hall with stage, supper room, kitchen, bar, storage room, women’s and men’s toilets and an upstairs balcony. The advertisement states that the hall has a floor area of 351 square metres, and a capacity of 180 people.¹⁹

The hall’s Annual Report for the 2016-17 financial year revealed that it had raised \$840.00 from hall hire, and \$3,928.00 from ‘other revenue’, totalling \$4,768.00. The ‘other revenue’ was derived from the sale of lambs and wool from the cemetery property. The hall was being used for six hours weekly, while a few other users hired it throughout the year.²⁰

If the hall’s early minute books and other related records survive, they may contain useful information on its history and its various developments since 1935 – including in the Oroua County Council records now at Archives Central, in Feilding. Furthermore, given the extent of the anti-Germanism in and around Halcombe during WWI (the town’s German Lutheran Church was even burnt down through

¹⁶ *The Feilding Express Scrapbook*: Between 1st August 1946 and 30th July 1948

<http://feildingphotos.mdc.govt.nz/nodes/view/18527#idx21643>

¹⁷ *Halcombe School 1877-1977* (Halcombe, 1977)

http://www.halcombe.school.nz/index_files/Halcombe%20Centenary%201877%20-%201977.pdf

¹⁸ Jock Phillips, *To the Memory: New Zealand’s War Memorials* (Nelson, 2016), pp. 177-179

¹⁹ Manawatu District Council:

http://www.mdc.govt.nz/Living_Leisure/Community_Facilities/Halls_and_Recreation_Complexes/Halcombe_Memorial_Hall || This webpage erroneously states that the hall was built in 1938, whereas it appears to have been completed in early 1936.

²⁰ Manawatu District Council: ‘File 9/2009, Halls, Halcombe Memorial, July 1998’

arson in 1917²¹), it is perhaps noteworthy also that a hall built by a member of the district's German immigrant community; who lived as an adult through the town's sometimes severe WWI trauma; had this hall built and named for a British king shortly before WWII broke out; and then sold it (or otherwise passed it over) to become a community memorial to Halcombe's WWII dead. At the time of the death of Amelia's husband, Charles in 1918, the couple had two sons serving overseas in WWI – one of whom was awarded a Distinguished Conduct Medal (DCM) for conspicuous gallantry in 1917. Both survived. However, a grandson, Robert Managh McKee, was killed in action at El Alamein on 5 September 1942, aged 23.²²

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

Planning, style, construction

The single storey timber framed hall has a main gable with boxed eaves running east west. The original street frontage is symmetrical with a round headed entry, double casements with toplights either side and shallow curve headed windows above the casements. The gable has plain bargeboards with a collar tie as a simple gable screen. A later lean-to addition to the north has a parapet on the street front and there is a largely flat roofed extension at the rear.

Other windows are a mix of timber and aluminium casement. Apart from the front entry there are doors on the southern and north elevations.

Cladding is rusticated weatherboards and the building is roofed with corrugated steel. There is a brick chimney in the central south elevation.

The style of the hall could be described as a free style, without any specific references to obvious styles. The casement windows with top hung toplights were popular in a number of styles from the 1920s to the 1950s while boxed eaves were common in neo-Georgian buildings. Curved openings were common in the Georgian and Spanish Mission styles.

Many Memorial Halls were constructed throughout New Zealand following WWII and many, particularly in rural areas and small towns were simple, unadorned designs similar to the Halcombe Hall.

No plans of the building have been sighted and the interior was not able to be inspected.

Setting

The hall is constructed on Willoughby Street, to the east of and parallel to the railway line and Halcombe Road, the main road between Feilding and State Highway 1. The hall is sited close to the street and southern boundary of the property and has a largely empty section at the rear, with the exception of a corrugated steel clad shed.

Opposite the hall is the fire station while to the north is a play centre and several houses. To the south is the junction of Willoughby Street and Stanway Road with the Halcombe Tavern on the north east corner with Stanway Road, and the former Halcombe Post Office on the south east corner. In the centre of this junction is a war memorial.

²¹ *Feilding Star*, 16 July 1917, p. 3(3)

²² Charles Managh + Amelia Henrietta Schwass, Halcombe: Family Tree Circles: <http://www.familytreecircles.com/charles-managh-amelia-henrietta-schwass-halcombe-68773.html> ; also 'Robert Managh McKee', Auckland Museum, Online Cenotaph: <http://www.aucklandmuseum.com/war-memorial/online-cenotaph/record/C29479>

Halcombe village is largely flat with gradually rising ground to the east and west.

SUMMARY OF HERITAGE VALUES

The Halcombe Hall has **low to high local** significance for **architectural, representivity, rarity, group, authenticity, people, event, pattern, cultural identity, public esteem, commemorative and educational** heritage values.

The building has **low architectural** but **high representivity** values as an example of a simply designed community hall. Although built in honour of King George V's Silver Jubilee, it has served mostly as a WWII memorial hall. Many of these were constructed by communities throughout New Zealand and the form, scale and construction are also typical of these. Being one of many such halls, the building has **low rarity** but high **group** value.

The hall exterior appears to have been modified several times to the side and rear such that it has **low to moderate authenticity**.

The hall has **high historic people, event, pattern, cultural identity, public esteem and commemorative** values as a war memorial commemorating those who died in the two World Wars. Apart from its association with those killed in the two World Wars, it is also associated with Amelia Managh, a member of the local German community who built it to honour King George V and who celebrated her 80th and 85th birthdays in the hall prior to it being purchased by the local council as a memorial hall.

It is of interest that the hall was built to honour King George V by a member of the German immigrant community, a community who were not welcome in the district during WWI and then used as a memorial to soldiers who were killed in both wars, with Germany as the enemy.

Given the range and levels of heritage values, the Halcombe Memorial hall has **moderate education** values as it can contribute to an understanding of settlement, emigration, and the history of war memorials in the Manawatu.

SOURCES

Printed Sources

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Online Sources

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Auckland Museum, online cenotaph: <http://www.aucklandmuseum.com/war-memorial/online-cenotaph/> [as per footnote]

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and
<http://feildingphotos.mdc.govt.nz/nodes/view/18524#idx21469> [as per footnotes]
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Geni.com: <https://www.geni.com/people/Amelia-Managh/6000000059873017901>
Google Street View <https://www.google.co.nz/maps/> [as per references in text]
Halcombe School and District: Diamond Jubilee 1877-1937 (Feilding, 1937)
http://www.halcombe.school.nz/index_files/Halcombe%20School%20Diamond%20Jubilee%201937.pdf
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Manawatu District Council:
http://www.mdc.govt.nz/Living_Leisure/Community_Facilities/Halls_and_Recreation_Complexes/Halcombe_Memorial_Hall
Managh family information is held at the Marton Historical Village, and referenced through:
<http://thecommunityarchive.org.nz/node/85780> [not sighted for this study]
MyHeritage.com: https://www.myheritage.com/names/charles_managh
Papers Past: <https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/newspapers>: *Evening Post, Feilding Star, Poverty Bay Herald, Rangitikei Advocate and Manawatu Argus, Wanganui Herald* [as per footnotes and text]

Other Sources

Manawatu District Council: 'File 9/2009, Halls, Halcombe Memorial, July 1998'; Certificates of Title. The files on this hall held at Archives Central on behalf of MDC were not sighted for this study (mostly being of fairly recent origin), but their references may be viewed online using the search words 'Halcombe Memorial Hall' and 'Halcombe Hall'. However, there are two files relating to insuring the hall dating from 1950 and 1951 under the search words 'Halcombe Hall – along with other Oroua County Council files that 'may' contain useful information. See: http://archivescentral.org.nz/en/manawatu_dc for the references.

IMAGES



Figure 2 Halcombe Memorial Hall. Google Street View – February 2010



Figure 3 Halcombe Memorial Hall. Google Street View – October 2013



Figure 4 Halcombe Memorial Hall, with the Halcombe Play Centre in the foreground. Google Street View – November 2013