

HALCOMBE WAR MEMORIAL – intersection Stanway Road and Willoughby Street, Halcombe



Architect: Unknown

Construction date: 1921

Visible materials: Cement rendered concrete plinth, granite shaft

Architectural style: Obelisk

Use/building type: Memorial

Date and Compiler: Ian Bowman, 2016

Heritage New Zealand listing: Category 2

Proposed category: B

PHYSICAL AND SOCIAL HISTORY¹

Introduction

The Halcombe War Memorial has been the subject of a book – *Halcombe Heroes: World War One* compiled by Sarah Rolston, and published in 2015. This book identifies the First World War men named on the war memorial. However, it does not record the history of the war memorial itself.² The memorial's history is, however, covered briefly in the book *Communities Remember World War One: Memorials of the Manawatu District*, compiled by Peter Olsen and Janet Doyle, published in 2014. The following study expands on these.

Background

It seems likely that the establishment of this particular war memorial will have provided quite a lot of healing in this ethnically diverse town and district. As well as a significant Maori community living nearby on the Te Reu Reu Reserve, Halcombe and the rural area around it, was also settled in the 1870s by a number of immigrant families from the old German Confederation. From the time of WWI,

¹ Olsen, P., Doyle, J., *Communities Remember World War One*, 2014, page 31

² Sarah Rolston, *Halcombe Heroes: World War One* (Feilding, 2015)

some of these people preferred to identify with their Polish heritage – however, to outsiders (descendants of British immigrants etc.) even the Polish families were largely viewed as being the enemy Germans during WWI – along with the families who actually were of German origin. Despite this, the young men from these families who went overseas and who sometimes died there, were likely to be grandchildren of the original (adult) immigrants, and so the homeland they identified with was New Zealand. This did not, however, deter the most aggressive of onlookers. Especially annoying to those people were the three German Lutheran churches in the vicinity, those at Marton, Rongotea and Halcombe. As a result, the parishioners soon stopped conducting their religious services in their native tongue. By the time the war ended, the Rongotea Lutheran parsonage³ and the Halcombe Lutheran Church⁴ had been destroyed in arson attacks (on 2 July 1917 and 16 July 1917 respectively). Finally, on 5 February 1922, the Rongotea Lutheran Church also succumbed to an arson attack.⁵ Attempts were also made to burn down the Marton Lutheran Church, but these had been thwarted by having the building constantly guarded. It still survives today.⁶

In 1920, one M.P. described the Halcombe German community as having been “*one seething mass of hostility*” toward the wider community during the war. He had felt that the whole lot should have been interned during the war. It is hard to imagine how else Halcombe’s Germanic community might have felt, given the new aggression against them.⁷ Although mass internment was beyond the means and inclination of the NZ Government, they would at least have found an old acquaintance at the internment camp had they been interned – as the former Stanway schoolmaster, who doubtless had taught some of the younger members of this community (now Major Dugald Matheson), was the erratic and mentally unstable commandant of the Somes Island Internment Camp.⁸



UNVEILING OF HALCOMBE WAR MEMORIAL, 1921.

Figure 1 Unveiling the Halcombe War Memorial on 27 July 1921. The Halcombe Post Office is in the background. (Source: Manawatu District Library: <http://feildingphotos.mdc.govt.nz/assets/display/17749-max>)

³ *Manawatu Times*, 3 July 1917, p. 5

⁴ *Feilding Star*, 16 July 1917, p. 3

⁵ *Manawatu Standard*, 6 February 1922, p. 5

⁶ Val Burr, *German-ating the Seeds of Anger: The Great War’s impact on Germans in Manawatu and Rangitikei* (B.A.[Hons.] History Research Exercise, Massey University, 1996), p. 26-27

⁷ Val Burr, *German-ating the Seeds of Anger*, p. 24

⁸ Val Burr, *Somes Island Internment Camp for Enemy Aliens during the First World War: An Historical Enquiry* (A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements of a Master of Arts in History with Honours, at Massey University, 1998), pp. 183-185

The book *Halcombe Heroes: World War One* (pp. 55-56) points to confusion over just who “W. Tua” was, as shown on the WWI section of the memorial, as no-one of that name had been found. However updated information on Auckland War Memorial Museum’s ‘Cenotaph’ website identifies him as Whakamarau Tuawaerenga, also known as James Tua (Service No. 16/480), who had been born in Marton on 16 October 1893. However, he had been living in the King Country at the time of his enlistment.⁹

The First Eighty Years

The Halcombe War Memorial, like the others around the country, had been paid for by its local community.¹⁰ It was duly unveiled by Major William Henry McLean, M.C. on 27th July 1921.¹¹ McLean had been a Feilding schoolteacher before his military service in WWI. He sailed for the Middle East in 1916 as commander of the 10th Reinforcements, Wellington Infantry Battalion, B Company, having been promoted to major shortly before departure.¹²

The following information on the unveiling ceremony comes from an unsourced newspaper clipping¹³ – probably the *Feilding Star* of 28 July 1921. The article begins:

“To the glory of God and in memory of the soldiers of the district who lost their lives in the Great War, a memorial was unveiled at Halcombe yesterday. In fine, though cold, weather there was a large and representative gathering. The monument, which is obelisk in form, is of polished granite, on a concrete base. It stands in the centre of the street, opposite the Post Office, and will always be a conspicuous reminder of the war and its toll on the budding manhood of the district.

“Mr J. Morrison presided over the gathering, and in his opening address stated that the memorial cost £246, and the sundry expenses added £10. The total amount collected was £249, and the balance required would soon be forthcoming, he felt sure. The whole sum had come from the Raumanga and Rangitaua ridings of the Oroua country. The settlers should and did all recognise what they owed to those who had fought and died for the Empire. Mr Morrison thanked the people for the liberal way in which they had assisted the committee in the matter.”

The Methodist, Presbyterian and Anglican ministers then began the proceedings, followed by the unveiling itself:

“Major W.H. McLean, M.C., was then called on to unveil the memorial. He thanked the committee for asking him to perform this ceremony, and congratulated the people of the district on their enterprise in putting up such a suitable memorial. They would be present at this function with mixed feelings. With some there would be pride at seeing the names of relatives on the monument, yet it meant tearing open of old wounds. They would remember the strain during the war, the anxious waiting and the fear of getting the sad news of the death of a son or brother. The soldiers knew that the strain was greater on the people in New Zealand than on the soldiers themselves, because they knew they were not always in the trenches. The strain came on the soldiers during the time when the epidemic swept through New Zealand just after the Armistice, when they had the fear of hearing that some relative had passed away. These men, he asked them to remember, had died in no mean cause, and they were members of no mean army. The British Army was a wonderful one, and the New Zealand Division had pulled their weight. They were second to none, making a great reputation on the field and

⁹ ‘Cenotaph’: Auckland War Memorial Museum: <http://www.aucklandmuseum.com/war-memorial/online-cenotaph/record/C15965>. Also Rolston, pp. 55-56. (Note that the other alternative Rolston suggested, Private Te Whatu Tua, appears to have survived the war. The date Rolston suggested for his death, was in fact the date both Tuas sailed from Wellington bound for Gallipoli.)

¹⁰ *Auckland Star*, 28 July 1921, p. 4. This is also recorded on the memorial.

¹¹ *Manawatu Times*, 28 July 1921, p. 4

¹² *Feilding Star*, 26 February 1916, p. 3; ‘Cenotaph’, Auckland War Memorial Museum: <http://www.aucklandmuseum.com/war-memorial/online-cenotaph/record/C64546>

¹³ Halcombe Community & Districts: http://www.halcombcommunity.co.nz/uploads/2/2/4/3/22439880/anzac_day_historic_article.pdf

off. Those whom they remembered this day had set a high and noble example. In spite of the Disarmament Conferences and Leagues of Nations, there would always be wars, though the soldiers who saw the waste and devastation of it all, hated it. The example set by the soldiers commemorated would be an inspiration to others when the call came.

“Major McLean then unveiled the memorial, with the words: To the glory of God and in loving and everlasting memory of the men of this district who gave up their lives in the Great War, 1914-1918.”

Next to speak was the local MP, the Hon. D.H. Guthrie, who had also spent the preceding few days visiting soldier settlements around the North Island¹⁴:

“The Hon. D.H. Guthrie, M.P., Minister of Lands, accepted it as a privilege to be present at this gathering, arranged to honour the names of those boys who fought in the war. From this district 86 had gone away, and they had done their duty nobly and well, and 15 had lost their lives. These would always have their names honoured. When the call came to New Zealand, it was responded to quickly, and over 100,000 men had gone to face the greatest dangers and they had never flinched. Sixteen thousand had lost their lives, and their names would forever remain green with us. Referring to the work of the Repatriation Department, the Minister said 9,118 soldiers had been placed on the land, and over 9,600 had been assisted to get homes of their own. Every possible care had been and was being taken of the wounded and maimed men. The Repatriation Department had done a wonderful work, 78,000 names being on their records. The Government would not let the soldier settlers go down so long as they were triers. Of the returned men, the Department had found employment for 24,192 who needed advice or assistance. Mr Guthrie referred to the fact that many years ago he had been a teacher at Halcombe school, and he saw on the memorial names of families who were represented at the school in his day. He hoped these names would always be remembered with honour.”

The next speaker was *“Mr H. Pryce (who) referred to the gathering as the most solemn in the history of Halcombe, and said he had been asking himself what was the prevailing feeling in his own mind. Was it sadness, or pride, or exaltation, or sympathy for the relatives of the fallen soldiers? These dead heroes had passed on to those remaining duties to perform. That was one feeling he had. The soldiers had saved the country from slavery and from industrial chaos. It was for the living not to fail the dead. Mr Pryce thought the memorial should appeal specially to the children, and he suggested that every child should memorise the names on it. The example of the fallen men should press on the children the love of their country.”*

Peter Olsen and Janet Doyle's book *Communities Remember World War One: Memorials of the Manawatu District* (p. 31) states that a copy of the programme for the unveiling ceremony is held in the Feilding & Districts' Community Archive. In addition to stating that Major McLean was to do the unveiling, it added that an address was given to be given by John Morrison, and that the music was provided by the Halcombe band.¹⁵ John Morrison was a prominent local farmer, a member of the Oroua County Council, and also involved with the Halcombe Brass Band.¹⁶ A brief search on the background of John Morrison – of Tokorangi, Halcombe - suggests that he could have been likely to have been one of the prime movers toward erecting this memorial. However, he had sold his farm there in 1920, and a community farewell for him in February 1920 outlines his extensive contributions. He subsequently moved to Whanganui, but clearly he visited Halcombe on this important day.¹⁷

¹⁴ *NZ Herald*, 23 July 1921, p.10

¹⁵ Peter Olsen & Janet Doyle, *Communities Remember World War One: Memorials of the Manawatu District* (Feilding, 2014). Olsen & Doyle's reference for the programme is "Programme – FDCA Collection – Ref. MDC. 2009.22.57.03"

¹⁶ *Feilding Star*, 13 June 1914, p. 2, also *Feilding Star*, 6 September 1919, p. 2 (John Morrison had previously stood as the Liberal candidate against Hon. D.H. Guthrie for the Oroua Electorate)

¹⁷ *Feilding Star*, 12 February 1920, p. 2, 14 February 1920, p. 2, 17 February 1920, p. 2, 15 May 1920, p. 2

Following the Second World War, another nine names joined the names of the original ones on another face of the memorial – at least four of these men being from the local Maori community.¹⁸ In 1950, the Halcombe Memorial Hall was also dedicated as a memorial to the men killed in both world wars.¹⁹

On 2 July 1982, the memorial was given a Category Two listing with the NZ Historic Places Trust (now Heritage New Zealand).²⁰

In 1997, a company named 'In Deep Productions' contacted Manawatu District Council seeking permission to film a Tui commercial in Halcombe, and to put a fake statue over the existing memorial, where the fake statue was pointing to the nearby Halcombe Hotel. The intention was to pretend that three gasping actors approaching it, head to the pub in search of a drink of Tui beer. It was not apparent what the outcome of the request was.²¹

Throughout the first seven decades of its existence, the memorial sat in the middle of the intersection with only roadway around it. However, by 1998, the local community had decided that there was a need to slow down the traffic passing through the town. Vehicles were speeding down the Stanway Hill and into the town, and there had been one or two nasty accidents. The result was the installation of the present roundabout surrounding the war memorial.²²

Recent Years

As the centenary of the First World War approached, a decision was made to research and publish the stories of the men from that war who are named on this memorial and also on the school memorial. The *Manawatu Standard*, of 18th May 2012, then published an article entitled: 'Honouring Halcombe's heroes'

An annual grant of \$2700 from Manawatu District Council and the 2014 Gallipoli centenary have prompted Halcombe Community Committee to research the names on the Halcombe School memorial archway and the cenotaph in the village.

Sarah Rolston has set herself the task of tracing the names of soldiers whose names are recorded on the two memorials, and try to source photographs of as many as possible.

The annual grant to community councils is to be used by community committees for a project such as this one, signs or seats which the community consider will benefit their community.

"The idea of producing a booklet with photos of the soldiers and a little about each one, was prompted by a similar project undertaken by George Kereama for Maori Battalion soldiers. Researching local soldiers in the Feilding Library, I came across a book by the Feilding Agricultural High School Old Pupils Association in 1948 which lists a number of the same names, which has given me a head start."

One of those former pupils was Hamuera Paul Te Punga, who had been dux of the school, a rugby hero and was training as a lawyer when he enlisted. He left New Zealand with the Maori Battalion in 1939, and returned but then went back and held the rank of Major when he was killed in Italy on September 23, 1944.

"He was easy to research, because he was well known. But other soldiers will be harder to find out about. Some will still have family in the area, but others may not be known now, particularly WW1 soldiers. The Crozier brothers were also in the book, but less was known about them."

Mrs Rolston has some information about 11 of the names, but would be interested to hear more of their stories.

¹⁸ Note that the two books that cover the memorial focus on WWI only. In fact the monument itself is the source of the WWII information.

¹⁹ Olsen & Doyle, p. 32

²⁰ Heritage NZ: <http://www.heritage.org.nz/the-list/details/1201>

²¹ Manawatu District Council: File 4/3513, 'Memorials - Heritage Management - General

²² *Manawatu Standard*, 4 February 1998, p. 2

She intends to make use of the Manawatu District Community Archives to search for more information about the names on the memorials, and has been given a few names of people who may have more information.

Mrs Rolston describes herself as an adopted New Zealander, and her knowledge of New Zealand's military history is very limited. She said finding out about these soldiers is intriguing.

"Some names are listed on both memorials, such as J Cuff, yet WM Cuff is only listed on the cenotaph and not at the school. Maybe that means he was an older brother, cousin or uncle who did not attend Halcombe school. It would be interesting to hear those stories."

Among the names on the memorials known to be still in the area is Natzske (since changed to Nitschke), Cowdrey, Te Whare, Gotty, Wapp and Sandilands.

"At the Halcombe Anzac service this year I was told the first soldier to die at Gallipoli was from Halcombe. I would really like to know more about that," Mrs Rolston said.

There are 40 names listed on the two arches and Mrs Rolston would be grateful for any information about these soldiers.

They are 1914-18: C Clapham, L Clover, J Cuff, W M Cuff, N Hogg, R Linton, W Linton, A Palmer, C Phillips, C C Seigel, J A Seigel, F Voss, C Wapp, H Wishnowsky, L M Natzske, M H Hogg, A Cowdrey, R Fearon, J Hammond, W McDonald, A Neilson, P Roberts, W Tua.

1939-45: W Clapham, L Calman, A Crozier, N Crozier, P Elliott, A Gillon, J Neilson, J P O'Dea, B Sandilands, F Boddington, E Campbell, J H Davey, D Gotty, B Hogg, T Rewai, P Te Punga, J Te Whare.

If photographs of the soldiers can be obtained, the intention is to reproduce, frame and hang them in a public space within the village, possibly the rugby clubrooms or the school hall.²³

The book was duly published in 2015.



Figure 2 The Halcombe War Memorial photographed in about 1986 by Jock Phillips or Chris Maclean – probably for their book *The sorrow and the pride: New Zealand war memorials*, published in 1990. (Source: 'Halcombe war memorial' : <http://www.nzhistory.net.nz/media/photo/halcombe-war-memorial>)

²³ *Manawatu Standard*, 18 May 2012: <http://www.stuff.co.nz/manawatu-standard/your-manawatu/feilding-herald/6945111/Honouring-Halcombes-heroes>

ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN

The memorial has a black granite obelisk on a red/brown stone pedestal, which in turn stands on a three-stepped painted cement rendered plinth. The obelisk comprises three major sections: a chamfered pedestal, a lower shaft, a four-faced pediment and the obelisk above.

The obelisk form originated in Egypt where it was considered to be a ray of sunlight made solid and that God existed within the structure. The word obelisk is Greek meaning a prong for roasting and indicated protection, defence and stability. With about one third of all WWI memorials based on the obelisk design, it was the most common design. Cenotaphs, gates and arches were the next most common. A number of memorials included marble human figures while domed cupolas and crosses were rare²⁴.

Many war memorials were located so that they were highly visible, usually at a cross roads or a major public roads. In this case, the memorial is located at the intersection of two streets in the small township of Halcombe. Opposite to the south-east is the former Post Office and to the north west is the Halcombe Hotel.

REVIEW OF REPORT

Based on a review of the report and viewing of Council files, the assessment undertaken in 2016 for this memorial is still applicable as at April 2021.

SUMMARY OF HERITAGE VALUES

The war memorial has **low to high local** significance for **architectural, technological, rarity, representativeness, group, authenticity, people, event, pattern, cultural, public esteem, commemorative** and **education** values.

The memorial has **moderate architectural** and **technological** values as a good example of an obelisk-styled war memorial using common materials, style and symbolism of the period.

The memorial has **low rarity** but **high representativeness** and **group** values as one of many similar memorials erected throughout the region and New Zealand to remember soldiers who were killed in World Wars 1 and 2.

The memorial has **high authenticity** with little visible change to the structure.

The memorial has **high historic people, event, pattern and cultural identity, public esteem, commemorative** and **education** values as a war memorial commemorating those who died in World Wars 1 and 2 and where memorial services have been held.

SOURCES

Printed Sources

Manawatu Standard (Hard copy as per footnotes)

²⁴ <http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/memorials-and-monuments/page-4>

Olsen, Peter, & Doyle, Janet, *Communities Remember World War One: Memorials of the Manawatu District* (Feilding, 2014)

Rolston, Sarah, *Halcombe Heroes: World War One* (Feilding, 2015)

Online Sources

'Cenotaph': Auckland War Memorial Museum: <http://www.aucklandmuseum.com/war-memorial/online-cenotaph/> (as per footnotes)

Google Streetview: www.google.co.nz (as per footnote)

Halcombe Community & Districts website: 'Halcombe History':

<http://www.halcombecommunity.co.nz/history.html> & also the unsourced unveiling article from 1921 in 'Anzac Day':

http://www.halcombecommunity.co.nz/uploads/2/2/4/3/22439880/anzac_day_historic_article.pdf

'Halcombe war memorial': <http://www.nzhistory.net.nz/media/photo/halcombe-war-memorial>

Heritage NZ: <http://www.heritage.org.nz/the-list/details/1201>

Papers Past: <https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/newspapers> (*Auckland Star*, *Feilding Star*, *Manawatu Standard*, *Manawatu Times*, *NZ Herald*): (as per footnotes and text)

Other Sources

Burr, Val, *German-ating the Seeds of Anger: The Great War's impact on Germans in Manawatu and Rangitikei* (B.A. [Hons.] History Research Exercise, Massey University, 1996)

Burr, Val, *Somes Island Internment Camp for Enemy Aliens during the First World War: An Historical Enquiry* (A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements of a Master of Arts in History with Honours, at Massey University, 1998)

Manawatu District Council: File 4/3513, 'Memorials - Heritage Management - General'; Feilding Public Library (as per photo caption)