

MEMORIAL GATES, FORMER SANSON SCHOOL – 2A Dundas Road, Sanson



Architect/builder: Not known

Construction date: 1924

Visible materials: Marble, concrete, steel gates, lead lettering

Architectural style: Gates

Use/building type: Memorial

Date and Compiler: Ian Bowman, 2018

Proposed ranking: B

PHYSICAL AND SOCIAL HISTORY¹

On July 24 1919 a public meeting was held at the town hall to discuss a memorial to commemorate those who had fought in World War One. In 1920 the Manawatu County Council confirmed that a captured German machine gun should be installed in the school grounds. Four years later, on August 31 1924, Major General C W Melville, General Officer commanding the New Zealand Defence Force unveiled the memorial which comprised a fence, gates and plaques on four posts outside Sanson School, on Dundas Road, State Highway 3 through Sanson.

The Evening Star noted the Major Generals comments when unveiling the memorial. "*I think the spirit of the New-Zealand troops, whether on Gallipoli or in Egypt, Mesopotamia, or France, was a magnificent one,*" said Major-General C. W. Melvill, General Officer Commanding the N.Z. Defence Forces, when unveiling the local war memorial at Sanson on Sunday afternoon. "*I am not a New Zealander, but I had the privilege of commanding New Zealand men,*" he added, continuing to state that on the field and off it he had found their actions very fine.

¹ Olsen, Peter, Doyle, Janet, *Communities Remember World War One, Memorials of the Manawatu District*, Janet Doyle, Fielding, 2015

He added the following, indicating the reason for the location of the memorial outside a school:

“By us their deeds and names will never be forgotten, but we must make an appeal to the young generation to keep their memory clear”.

ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN

The memorial comprises a rough-cast rendered concrete fence, pillars, an ornate steel gate and marble plaques. The plaques are on the gate posts, indented from the road and posts located on the road boundary and either side of the gate posts and forward of the gate.

Each of the posts either side of the gate has a plaque headed with “In Memoriam” and the names of six soldiers each. The post to the south of the south gate posts has a plaque on the road side, which states:

“This fence was erected by the residents of Sanson and District to the glory of God and in the memory of the men who fought and died for the country

The Motherland called and they went

1914-1918”

The northern side of the same post has another marble plaque, which is headed “Roll of Honour” and lists 19 names. The post on the opposite side also has a marble plaque headed “Roll of Honour” and another 19 names. Marble plaques are fixed to four of the pillars, two either side of the central gate, which is indented from the road with curved walls.

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 rare².

The memorial gates are located on the old Sanson School site. The old school site is on the south side of Dundas Road at the northern end of Sanson. The school buildings are one of a number in a strip development either side of the road, making up the small community. The site and Sanson is surrounded by farmland, which is generally flat. In October 1991, Sanson School relocated to facilities at 2970 State Highway One, Sanson, which previously housed the Manawatu District Council. A Sanson War Memorial Marble Tablet was re-dedicated at the new school site in 1993, which is the subject of a separate heritage report. The memorial gates are now in private ownership.

SUMMARY OF HERITAGE VALUES

The war memorial has **low to high local** significance for **physical, historical and cultural** heritage values.

The memorial has **moderate architectural** and **technological** values as a good example of a gate-styled war memorial using common materials and design of the period.

² <http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/memorials-and-monuments/page-4>

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 fallen and serving armed soldiers in World War One.

The memorial has **high authenticity** as it remains on its original site.

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 War One.

SOURCES

Printed Sources

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

Online Sources

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

Papers Past: <https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/newspapers>

‘Sanson war memorial’: <https://nzhistory.govt.nz/media/photo/sanson-war-memorial> (Ministry for Culture and Heritage)