

RANGIOTU WAR MEMORIAL – 1130 Rangiotu Road, Rangiotu



Architect/builder: Jones and Co, Palmerston North, Ike Cooksley snr. & the Rangiotu School boys

Construction date: 1921

Visible materials: Granite, concrete

Architectural style: Obelisk

Use/building type: Memorial

Date and Compiler: Ian Bowman, 2016

Proposed ranking: B

PHYSICAL AND SOCIAL HISTORY¹

Introduction

For over ninety years, the Rangiotu War Memorial stood alongside the Rangiotu Post Office. From there it overlooked what was once a busy main road – which was then State Highway 56. However, now the road is just Rangiotu Road or ‘Highway 56’ - after the SH56 status was relocated. The memorial also overlooked the Foxton-Palmerston North railway line. However the railway closed in 1959, and then the Post Office also closed in c1983. The former Post Office building was duly sold to become a residence, with the memorial remaining on its lawn. Then in April 2015, the memorial was relocated about 200 metres to stand alongside the Rangiotu Memorial Hall.

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

Building the Memorial

The land that was to accommodate the new Rangiotu Post Office and the war memorial, had been purchased by the Government from the Te Awe Awe family in 1918 for the sum of one shilling.² The Rangiotu Post & Telegraph Office was in due course officially opened on 27 June 1921.³



Figure 1 The Rangiotu War Memorial on its original site beside the former Rangiotu Post Office, probably in 2005. (Source: 'Rangiotu war memorial', <https://nzhistory.govt.nz/media/photo/rangiotu-war-memorial> [Ministry for Culture and Heritage])

Soon afterwards, the local Rangiotu and Baines communities combined to erect this war memorial, with fundraising being by public subscription. Unlike most war memorials of its type, this one was to not only name those from the area who had been killed, but it was also to name the many more who had returned. The local schoolchildren were also brought into the proceedings, with Mr Ike Cooksley snr. being assisted by a number of boys from the Rangiotu School, when they together built the memorial's base. Maren Dixon and Ngaire Watson's book, *A History of Rangiotu*, recorded that: "The concrete was mixed at the bottom of the hill and the boys had the task of carrying the concrete by bucket up to the site, forming a chain gang to do so."⁴

The Unveiling

The War Memorial was duly unveiled on 17

October 1921. Both local newspapers covered the unveiling in detail, albeit that the two reporters present picked up on different aspects of the story. For example, on the same day as the unveiling, the *Manawatu Standard* hastily recorded its account of the event – and key parts of it are presented here:

"Some time ago it was decided to erect, in the Rangiotu district, a war memorial by public subscription and the result is a very fine obelisk of gray granite, which has been placed in front of the new post office. The unveiling ceremony was performed to-day in the presence of a large gathering of settlers and school children by Major P. H. Bell, D. S.O., of the Defence Headquarters, Palmerston North, who was for some time adjutant at the Rifle Brigade camp at Rangiotu⁵, and through whose hands a number of local trainees passed.

² Maren Dixon & Ngaire Watson (eds.), *A History of Rangiotu* (Palmerston North, 1983), p. 23

³ Dixon & Watson, p. 38

⁴ Dixon & Watson, p. 53

⁵ The Rangiotu Military Camp operated from July 1915 to late 1916 (Ref: *Manawatu Standard*, 15 November 1916, p. 5; and 'Rangiotu Army Camp' – Manawatu Heritage: <https://manawatuheritage.pncc.govt.nz/item/fe6d1f8e-e7c8-4158-8d23-be3a8ac9fd1a>)

The *Manawatu Standard* then added that in his speech, the chairman of the memorial committee, Mr J.H. Simmonds, had also made a point of stating that the school children had helped to lay the memorial's foundation.⁶

The following morning the *Manawatu Times* published a more detailed account of the event under the headline: 'War Memorial: Unveiled at Rangiotu':



Figure 2 The former Rangiotu Post Office – at 1158 Rangiotu Road - with the concrete block that held the war memorial between 1921 and 2015, shown on the hilltop to the left of the photo. Google Streetview took this photograph in April 2015 – evidently between the 7th and 25th of April, as the memorial had been removed from this site, but correspondingly the Anzac Day wreaths had not yet appeared in the photo taken at the new site. (This image was screenshot on 18 January 2017)

“Few districts can boast a better record in the number of men sent to the 1914-18 war than Rangiotu. This is, indeed, a small district, yet it was able to swell the ranks by 73 men, of which number 14 made the supreme sacrifice. As in other parts of the country, the settlers, desirous of perpetuating the memory of those who went from their district, formed a committee with the object of, establishing a fund for the erection of a war memorial. So generous was the

response that, in but a short time, sufficient money was received and the construction of the memorial proceeded with. It has taken the form of a column of Scotch granite, rising from a substantial base. The memorial stands on a prominence, in front of Rangiotu's new post office. Despite the boisterous weather which prevailed yesterday, a large crowd gathered at noon to take part in the unveiling ceremony, which was performed by Major Bell, D.S.O., of the Defence Headquarters, Palmerston North....”

“Mr H. J. Simmons, chairman of the (memorial committee, referred) to the splendid response made by the district to the call for men. On a pro rata basis, they had sent as many, and in some cases, more than other parts. It was a trying period, but those who could not go did their best to fill the places of the boys, and also make the lot of those away as easy as it was at all possible for them to do. The settlers of the district considered they would be failing in their duty if a memorial was not erected in the men's honour—men who had nobly performed their duty to their country and the Empire. Children, in years to come, who passed along would read the names engraved on the memorial, and would probably be given food for thought. Mr Simmons then called on Major Bell to address the gathering and unveil the memorial.

“Major Bell said that this memorial, like hundreds of others that had been erected all over New Zealand, would serve a three-fold purpose. Firstly, it would remind the wives, mothers and children of the men who made the supreme sacrifice, though it was not altogether with sadness that we remembered those men. This memorial should remind us rather that they were the glorious dead. They had given up everything to do their duty, had died nobly, and their lives were complete. Secondly, the memorial would give the satisfaction of knowing that the people at home also did their duty to the men who went away. Any returned man who was present would know what was meant by 'mail day' in the field, and how eager they were to hear from the folks at home. The men realised that their people were doing their bit to keep up the spirits of those in the fields of battle. Thirdly,

⁶ *Manawatu Standard*, 17 October 1921, p. 5

there were still widows and orphans and maimed men in New Zealand to be cared for. In this connection Major Bell pointed out that the R.S.A. was a very strong body of earnest men, whose main object was to see that the country looked after the interests of the dependants and the men. He would not deny that there was a lot of 'hot air' spoken by people who styled themselves returned soldiers. They might be —but, there was the official returned man who was out to do everything possible in the interests of their comrades and the dependants. Major Bell urged his hearers, particularly the men who had not yet joined the R.S.A., to accord their utmost support to that body. It was a pathetic business visiting the various soldiers' hospitals and sanatoria, wherein there were men who were trying to get cured of wounds and disease. It was going to take a long time for us to repay those men for all they had suffered in our behalf. Passing on, Major Bell pointed out that this memorial stood on a main roadside, and would remind everybody who passed along what this district had done, and that the people were determined not to let the younger generation forget that the men who had given up everything had done their duty.

"Major Bell then unveiled the memorial, and the 'Last Post' was sounded by Corporal G. H. H. Adams..."

"Mr I. C. Cooksley added a word of praise to the parents and relatives of the boys. He also thanked the school children who had assisted in the erection of the memorial. The ceremony was concluded with the singing of the National Anthem.

"The names engraved on the memorial are as follow: —

"Died: Sergt. S. Russell; Troopers A. H. Corlett, F. Corlett and P. Costello; Riflemen L. J. Healey, G. W. Dodds and C. T. Scadden; Privates J. J. Cook, F. Godfrey, J. Glendinning, S. M. Hall, W. Ireland, G. Wright and H. J. Thompson.

"Returned: Lieutenant D. G. Moore; Second-Lieut. J. F. Riches; Sergt-Major L. Galbraith; Sergts. W. E. Cooksley, D.C.M., M.M., R. H. Day, W. A. Cook; Corporals C. V. Jewell, S. S. McCullum; Lance-Corporals J. J. Waller, Gunner F. Mills, Trooper H. Jewell, Riflemen A. A. N. Alsop, J. E. Hall, T. J. Kerrison, B. F. Robin, J. Rei, C. E. Simmons and B. G. Waller, Privates H. J. Chapman, H. Cooksley, T. J. Cook, J. H. Dewis, I. Donaldson, H. Devonshire, P. Dennam, F. Evans, A. Gibbs, G. Gimblett, J. Hill, Jas. Hill, A. Healey, B. Healey, R. A. Ingley, F. Little, P. Cameron, C. H. Cook, D. C. Cook, R. Glendinning, J. E. Lucas, R. Paid, J. S. H. Alsop, A. Anderson, J. Bugg, F. J. Long, J. P. Morecombe, A. Munn, J. Palliser, J. W. Peers, S. Pearce, H. J. Sandle, A. C. Seaton, R. Seaton, C. Spry, W. J. D. Spry, J. Smith, A. J. H. White, G. Wilson, G. Wilton and G. Young.⁷



Figure 3 Bill Devonshire laying a poppy on the Rangiotu War Memorial in memory of his father, Arthur Devonshire, on Anzac Day, 25 April 2013. (Photo: *Manawatu Standard*, 26 April 2013)

Following the Second World War, the names of the fifty people from the district who had served in that war, were recorded in a Roll of Honour Board that is on display at the Rangiotu Memorial Hall. Of this number, two were killed, and seven were wounded.⁸

The Relocation

The location of the memorial became an issue after the closure of the Rangiotu Post Office in late 1983 or early 1984.⁹ The building

⁷ *Manawatu Times*, 18 October 1921, p. 7 (abridged slightly)

⁸ Dixon & Watson, p. 111. The WWI names on the war memorial are also listed there – on pages 109 and 110.

⁹ The date of Rangiotu Post Office's closure was not researched further. However, indexing of the *Manawatu Standard* indicates that it occurred between August 1983, when the community was attempting to keep it open, and July 1984 when

was then sold for conversion to a residence, with, the writer understands, the property being sold back to the Te Awe Awe family, who had originally owned the site. Thus the memorial was able to remain in situ.



Figure 4 This photo was taken at the war memorial's rededication ceremony - held on 25 April 2015 as part of Rangiotu's Anzac Day ceremony. The sentries are ATC cadets from one of the two local ATC cadet corps. The flag pole was already in this location – although photos show that it had been moved about a metre to accommodate the memorial. ('Rangiotu Memorial Hall Events' Facebook page:

https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=978028988895070&id=855142297850407)

The Rangiotu community had begun holding its own Anzac Day service in 1936. Typically they held the service in the Rangiotu Memorial Hall, before parading the short distance to the war memorial beside the post office. After a wreath-laying and the playing of the Last Post, they would head back to the hall for a community morning tea and to catch up with old friends.¹⁰ When the settlement's last WWII veteran died, the locals met and decided to carry on holding their own Anzac Day commemoration – something deemed all the more important because their school and post office had closed and businesses had moved away. Typically some 40 to 50 people were attending the mid-morning ceremonies as at 2013.¹¹

In 2012, the memorial was cleaned up by Alan Horsfall.¹² However, its new improved appearance was shattered when the top of the memorial fell during the 6.2M 'Eketahuna earthquake' that occurred on Wellington Anniversary Day, 20 January 2014.¹³

The Facebook page 'Rangiotu Memorial Hall Events,' records that the war memorial was relocated down the road to its new site alongside the hall, on 7 April 2015. Comments made under the post on the relocation, recorded that this was a good move for the memorial, however, the people were going to miss the annual walk from the hall to the memorial and back. It was duly re-dedicated as part of the Anzac Day commemorations on 25th April of that year.¹⁴

the unused building was to be 'disposed of.' (Ref: *Manawatu Standard*, 31 August 1983, p. 1 and 27 July 1984, p. 4). The records relating to this post office listed on Archives NZ's website www.archway.archives.govt.nz also support this.

¹⁰ *Manawatu Standard*, 20 April 2011, p. T10: 'Tradition Maintained'

¹¹ *Manawatu Standard*, 26 April 2013, 'A good ol' country service: Then there's a morning tea with 'all the trimmings'

¹² *Feilding Herald*, 4 October 2012, p. 8

¹³ Peter Olsen & Janet Doyle, *Communities Remember World War One: Memorials of the Manawatu District* (Feilding, 2014), p. 51

¹⁴ *Manawatu Standard*, 24 April 2015

The memorial's old concrete base, which was created in 1921 with the assistance of the boys from Rangiotu School, remains on its original site, on the lawn of the former Rangiotu Post Office. In itself,



Figure 5 the original plinth and name of the building, photo Ian Bowman, 2 November 2016

the community involvement of the school children in 1921 makes the base alongside the former Post Office, significant in its own right.

Architect

Based on the inscription on the remains of the plinth in the original location, it is possible the designer of the memorial was Jones and Co of Palmerston North.

ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN

The memorial comprises an obelisk of Scottish granite¹⁵ with stepped, chamfered granite pedestal. The original plinth is of cement render and has four steps, the topmost is chamfered.

Names of soldiers who died, who were wounded and who returned are inscribed on the two lower steps of the pedestal while on the shaft of the obelisk there are crossed rifles and inscriptions. On the north face is

“For
Freedom
And justice”
And on the west face are crossed flags and
“IN MEMORIAM
THE SOLDIERS FROM THE
RANGIOTU DISTRICT
WHO FELL DURING
THE GREAT WAR
1914-1918

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

¹⁵ <https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/newspapers/MT19211018.2.66?query=rangiotu%20war%20memorial>

common. A number of memorials included marble human figures while domed cupolas and crosses were rare¹⁶.

Its new location is outside the Rangiotu Memorial Hall on the main road several hundred metres to the west of the original location. A timber flagpole is located to the immediate west of the memorial. Farms surround both sites with the Manawatu River to the east.

REVIEW OF REPORT

Based on a review of the report and viewing of Council files, the assessment undertaken in 2016 for this building 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 fallen and serving armed soldiers in World War 1.

The memorial has **low authenticity** as it has been relocated and separated from its base.

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 1 and where memorial services have been held.

SOURCES

Printed Sources

Dixon, Maren & Watson, Ngaire, (eds.), *A History of Rangiotu* (Palmerston North, 1983)

Feilding Star (Hard copy, as per footnotes)

Manawatu Standard (Hard copy, as per footnotes)

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

Online Sources

Archives NZ's website: www.archway.archives.govt.nz (Search words: 'Rangiotu Post Office' & 'Rangiotu Memorial') Note that these files were not sighted for this study.

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

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

'Rangiotu Memorial Hall Events' Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/Rangiotu-Memorial-Hall-Events-855142297850407/?fref=ts>

¹⁶ <http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/memorials-and-monuments/page-4>

'Rangiotu war memorial': <https://nzhistory.govt.nz/media/photo/rangiotu-war-memorial> (Ministry for Culture and Heritage)