

Cheltenham War Memorial, 1460 Kimbolton Road, Cheltenham



Figure 1: The Cheltenham War Memorial – showing the WWI names and the base of the flagpole (15 December 2017)

Architect:

Builder:

Construction Date: 1919

Visible materials: Concrete stepped base, stepped and chamfered granite plinth and obelisk

Architectural style: Obelisk

Use/building type: Memorial

Date and compiler: Val Burr 2018; Ian Bowman 2020

Heritage NZ Listing: Nil

Proposed ranking: B

PHYSICAL AND SOCIAL HISTORY

Introduction

The Cheltenham War Memorial originally stood alongside St. Paul's Anglican Church in Kimbolton Road a short distance beyond the village in the direction of Kiwitea. The three-tiered polished granite obelisk, which lists the names of ten men from WWI and four more from WWII, was unveiled on 9 November 1919. With the unveiling of this memorial, St. Paul's became the first church in the district to have a war memorial.¹ However, with the closure of the church, the memorial was removed to a small reserve adjoining Kimbolton Road, Cheltenham, in the direction of Feilding and close to the turn-off onto the Cheltenham-Hunterville Road.

The First Site of the Memorial

¹ Heritage New Zealand: 'St. Paul's Church, Cheltenham': <http://www.heritage.org.nz/the-list/details/7284>

St. Paul's Church was designed by Frederick de Jersey Clere, built in 1904, and in due course consecrated on 3 November 1907.² It stands on a hill, with a concrete staircase leading up to it. Near the top is a landing, and it was upon this landing that the war memorial once stood. It is possible, based on the report of the unveiling ceremony that is quoted below, that this staircase was especially built to accommodate the memorial. The matter would require further investigation.

The Unveiling Ceremony

The *Feilding Star* of 10 November 1919 (p. 2) covered the unveiling ceremony in detail the day after the event:

"The memorial stone erected in honour the soldiers of the Cheltenham district who fell in the war was unveiled yesterday by Brigadier-General C.W. Melville, C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O.

"The memorial, which is in the form of an obelisk of polished granite, on a concrete base, has been placed on the Church of England section at the village, on the rise just before the church, and concrete steps lead up to it from the gate.

"The following names appear on the stone: —

"In memory of: Trooper R. Booth, Rifleman W.B. Bruce, Lance-Corp. John Burrell, Private James Dillon, Lance-Corp. S.J. Hunt, Lance-Corporal David Love, Corporal S.G. Madgin, Lieutenant G. D. Mayo, Private H.S.D. Stewart, Private F.W. Taylor.

"Under the names follow the words: 'From the Cheltenham district, who nobly gave their lives for freedom and justice in the Great War, 1914-1919.'

"There was a large assemblage at the ceremony from all parts of the district. Mr M. A. Conway presided, and said the purpose of the gathering was to honour the names of the noble men who had fallen in the war for freedom and justice."

The crowd had been addressed by the Rev. J.F. Mayo (the church's vicar), who remarked that the memorial was not so much for the sake of those living now, as for their children and their children's children. *"Those living now could hardly realise how much those who had given their lives had done for them. Try to imagine what the consequences would have been if the war had not been won..."*

The unveiling of the memorial was then undertaken by General Melville, who noted that a number of men named on the memorial had served under him.

Thereafter a special medal was given by Mr M.A. Conway to the next of kin of each fallen soldier - given on behalf of the people of the district. These had been especially designed for this purpose by Alfred Drury, R.A., a noted British sculptor.³ The newspaper report then described the design of the medals in detail, adding that: *"It was a most touching scene as the mother of each dead hero came forward and received the medal."*⁴

The *Manawatu Herald* of 11 November 1919 (p. 2) reported on one of the men who was related to a Foxton local. He was *"Corporal Sidney Madgin, brother of Mrs Freeman, of Paxton, who enlisted from Cheltenham on August 5th, 1914, and died of gas poisoning on May 24th, 1915. Mrs Freeman received a memorial medal. These medals depict Britannia succouring and crowning with a wreath of laurel a dying hero who still clings to the flag for which he has given*

² *Manawatu Standard*, 24 August 1968, p. 8

³ For example, the work of sculptor Alfred Drury on the Queen Victoria Memorial in Wellington: <https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/newspapers/NZH19320511.2.22.4?query=Alfred%20Drury> ; Also Alfred Drury (1856-1944) *Wikipedia*:

<http://www.victorianweb.org/victorian/sculpture/drury/index.html>

⁴ *Feilding Star*, 10 November 1919, p. 2

his all. In the background can be seen the 'setting sun,' indicative of departing life, the whole being surmounted by the simple yet touching words, 'Lest we forget.'..."

The Second World War

Following WWII, the names and inscriptions of four more men lost to that war, were added to the obelisk. This latter work had been paid for by the Cheltenham Patriotic Society, with the balance of what they had raised, being used toward the upkeep and maintenance of the memorial. Later two lights were installed alongside it. Until services were discontinued at the church, Anzac Day services were held at the memorial every year, with large attendances.⁵

Relocation

St. Paul's Anglican Church was deconsecrated in 2001 and in due course sold.⁶ This will have triggered the transfer of the war memorial to its present location. A signature impressed into the new concrete base indicates that the relocation work was undertaken by the firm Jones of Palmerston North. Photos taken of the memorial at the present site (which was then still largely unplanted) are shown on the nzhistory.govt.nz website with the date credited as "c2005".⁷ Certainly the memorial was in this location by March 2008. A flagpole was also installed alongside the memorial at some point between January 2013 and May 2015 – the dates when the Google Street View van passed by and photographed the site.⁸

ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN

The memorial comprises a granite obelisk, granite stepped and chamfered plinth and a concrete base.

The names of ten men from WWI and four more from WWII are inscribed on the memorial.

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 rare⁹.

The memorial is located on the east side of Kimbolton Road in a fenced enclosure with a small bridge access from the road. Opposite and to the north is the small rural settlement of Cheltenham. The surrounding setting is farmland.

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.

⁵ Thompson, Joyce, *A Short History of the Cheltenham Rural District of Feilding, New Zealand* (24-page typed booklet published circa 1990), p. 12-13. Note that Thompson states that the WWII names were unveiled on the memorial at Anzac Day on 25 April 1943 (p. 13), however the inscription refers to the 1939-1945 war, suggesting an error with Thompson's unveiling date.

⁶ Susan MacLean, *Architect of the Angels: The Churches of Frederick de Jersey Clere* (Wellington, 2003), p. 58

⁷ NZ History: 'Cheltenham War Memorial': <https://nzhistory.govt.nz/media/photo/cheltenham-war-memorial>

⁸ Google Street View images of the memorial dated 2008, 2013 and 2015.

⁹ <http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/memorials-and-monuments/page-4>

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 One and Two.

The memorial has **moderate authenticity** as it has been relocated from its original site.

The memorial has **moderate historic people, event, pattern and cultural identity, public esteem, commemorative** and **education** values as a war memorial commemorating those from Cheltenham who died in two world wars and one that is sited in its own enclosure off a public road.

SOURCES

Printed Sources

McGregor, Helen, *A Divine Legacy: A Photographic Study of the Churches of Frederick de Jersey Clere in the Manawatu and Rangitikei Districts* (Evenstar Photography, NZ, 2012)

MacLean, Susan, *Architect of the Angels: The Churches of Frederick de Jersey Clere* (Wellington, 2003)

'Anglican Church at Cheltenham', in *Manawatu Standard*, 24 August 1968, p. 9

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

Silcock, Jack Gilbert, *History of the Cheltenham School and District* (Feilding, 1961)

Thompson, Joyce, *A Short History of the Cheltenham Rural District of Feilding, New Zealand* (24-page booklet published circa 1990): Manawatu District Libraries:

<http://feildingphotos.mdc.govt.nz/nodes/view/19110#idx25149>

Online Sources

Google Street View <https://www.google.co.nz/maps/> (as per captions and footnotes)

Heritage New Zealand: 'St. Paul's Church, Cheltenham': <http://www.heritage.org.nz/the-list/details/7284> (Note that this source refers to the book *The First Fifty Years: the Story of St Paul's, Cheltenham*, 1954 by J.F. Mayo, however, no copy of this book was located for this study)

NZ History: 'Cheltenham War Memorial'

<https://nzhistory.govt.nz/media/photo/cheltenham-war-memorial> ; and 'Cheltenham School Roll of Honour' <https://nzhistory.govt.nz/media/photo/cheltenham-school-roll-honour>

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

Wikipedia: 'Alfred Drury':

<http://www.victorianweb.org/victorian/sculpture/drury/index.html>

IMAGES



Figure 2: The Cheltenham War Memorial in its original location, when photographed in about 1986 by Jock Phillips and Chris Maclean. (Source: NZ History: <https://nzhistory.govt.nz/media/photo/cheltenham-war-memorial>)



Figure 3: The former St. Paul's Anglican Church, Cheltenham. The memorial formerly stood at the top of the concrete steps leading to the church. (Source: Google Street View, February 2010)



Figure 4: The Cheltenham War Memorial – showing the WWII names – 15 December 2017