

RONGOTEA WAR MEMORIAL – Douglas Square, Rongotea



Architect/builder: Jones and Co Palmerston North

Construction date: 1921

Visible materials: Granite, concrete

Architectural style: Aedicule with orb

Use/building type: Memorial

Date and Compiler: Ian Bowman, 2018

Proposed ranking: B

PHYSICAL AND SOCIAL HISTORY

The *Manawatu Times* of 3 December 1920 noted the decision by local residents to construct a memorial to soldiers who died in World War One.

“At a meeting at Rongotea this week it was decided to erect a soldiers’ memorial in Douglas Square at a cost of £500. Mr R. A. Callender presided over the meeting at which some twenty settlers were present. Mr A. Glover was appointed secretary of the committee, which is to have charge of the matter.”¹

The Governor General Viscount Jellicoe dedicated the memorial on 28 November 1921. Over one thousand people attended the ceremony at which the Governor General stated:

¹ https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/newspapers/MT19201203.2.10?End_date=31-12-1930&phrase=0&query=Douglas+square+memorial+unveiling&start_date=01-01-1914&title=FS%2CFS%2CHC%2CMH%2CMS%2CMT%2CRAMA%2CTAIDT%2CWC%2CWH%2CWODEX

“They have given us who remain behind an example of self sacrifice and devotion to duty which we should all strive to follow throughout our lives. They gave their service for the cause of the Empire in war; we should give our service for the cause of the Empire in peace.”²

The memorial commemorates the deaths of 15 soldiers who died in the two world wars.

The base of the memorial has the words “Jones and Co PN”, presumably the builders of the memorial.



Figure 1 Visount Jellicoe at the dedication of Rongotea War Memorial
<https://manawatuheritage.pncc.govt.nz/item/67a3b46a-fd7a-4ba8-88a2-d068082159ad>

ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN

The memorial comprises an aedicule with an orb on top with splayed and rusticated pedestal, all of granite. The orb has 1914-18 inscribed on an angle, while underneath it is the words “For Humanity” and a list of those who died in action as well as those who died (presumably later from injuries). On the opposite side are the names of those killed in World War Two.

The plinth is of rendered concrete with three steps, the topmost of which is chamfered and lined out to resemble ashlar.

The aedicule was originally a shrine in the form of a miniature temple front containing a cult figure³. The orb, or globe, was a symbol of the Egyptian sun god, Re, and was popular in Victorian monuments

² Olsen, Peter, & Doyle, Janet, *Communities Remember World War One: Memorials of the Manawatu District* (Feilding, 2014)

Olsen, Peter, & Doyle, Janet, *Communities Remember World War One: Memorials of the Manawatu District* (Feilding, 2014), page 54

³ Adam, Robert, *Classical Architecture A Complete Handbook*, Viking, London, 1992, page 297

where it was representative of the creator. Obelisks were the most common design with cenotaphs, gates and arches the next most common. Aedicule memorials were rare.

The memorial is located in the north-west quadrant of Douglas Square in the centre of Rongotea. The site is grassed with flower beds in the south east corner, trees lining the northern perimeter and several seats facing in towards the memorial. Mersey and Thames Streets divide the square equally into four quadrants with a roundabout at its centre.

REVIEW OF REPORT

Based on a review of the report and viewing of Council files, the assessment undertaken in 2018 for this memorial is still applicable as at April 2021.

SUMMARY OF HERITAGE VALUES

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

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

The memorial has **high rarity, representativeness** and **group** values as one of few aedicule style memorials erected throughout the region but one of many in New Zealand installed to remember soldiers who died in both world wars.

The memorial has **high authenticity** as, unlike an adjacent memorial, it has been retained 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 both world wars and where memorial services have been held.

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>

'Rongotea war memorial': <https://nzhistory.govt.nz/media/photo/rongotea-war-memorial>