

Cenotaph, Civic Square, Hastings

Inventory Number 9; Property ID 21451; TRIM Reference: 21451#002#0007

NZHPT Register Number 1083

Report by Michael Kelly, Chris Cochran, NZHPT, 2004; Final Audit September 2012, updated 2015 Environmental Policy Team

Hastings CBD Heritage Inventory Project



CENOTAPH

OTHER NAMES: Hastings Cenotaph and Hawke's Bay Fallen Soldiers Memorial



Photo: P. Huddleston, 2015

LOCATION:

Street and Number: Civic Square (Russell Street Extension)

Location: Civic Square which is located adjacent to the Palmerston North - Gisborne Railway Line and Lyndon Road East. (Please note that the Russell Street Extension is not legal road and is located adjacent to Russell Street South).

City/ Town: Hastings

Region: Hawke's Bay

LEGAL DESCRIPTION:

Legal Description: Sections 75 & 91, Lots 1-7 DDP 672, Lot 174 & 178-182 DDP 83, Lots 1-5 DDP 348, Hawke's Bay Registry

Certificate of Title (includes Registry): HB43/101 & HB22/40, Hawke's Bay Land District

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SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANCE:

Architectural Value:

The design of this monument is dignified and appropriate to the purpose. It is almost style-less, but follows Classical principles in its tapering form and the profiles of plinth and capping. The choice of material is perfect, a local stone that has an air of permanence and solidity.

Cultural Value:

The construction and use of memorials as places of commemoration is a matter of deep cultural significance to New Zealanders. The need to have tangible places to express grief and gratitude to fallen soldiers is an integral part of New Zealand's culture and the Cenotaph reflects the people of Hastings' desire to acknowledge their collective loss.

Based on English architect Edward Luytens influential design for the Cenotaph at Whitehall, England, the Hastings Cenotaph symbolises the cultural links between, and shared sense of loss felt in England and New Zealand after the First World War.

Historic Value:

This memorial has been used for commemorative purposes since 1923, in particular for ANZAC Day services.

Technological value:

The memorial has technological value for the masonry construction, and for the use of a natural indigenous material.

HISTORY:

The Cenotaph in Civic Square, Hastings, is a solemn tribute to, and a commemoration of, the contribution of the 162 men of the city who served and died in the First World War.

In common with other cities and towns around New Zealand, the city of Hastings sent men to fight in the South African War, and World War I and II, and later wars, such as the Korean and Vietnam wars. During World War I, approximately 100,000 New Zealanders fought. Of those who served, almost 18,000 died, leaving virtually no New Zealand family untouched by loss. The sense of loss and grief manifested itself in the building of hundreds of memorials in towns and cities all over New Zealand. As noted by historians Chris MacLean and Jock Phillips, the memorials served as surrogate tombs for families of the New Zealanders buried in overseas graves and commemorated the achievements of all those who lost their lives.¹ The Cenotaph, which means 'empty tomb' was the product of an agreement by its citizens to combine resources to erect a suitably imposing monument.

The site chosen for Hastings' memorial was part of land that had been purchased by the Hastings Borough Council with the intention of forming a civic square. The site faced the extension of what was then known as Station Street. This street was later renamed

¹ Maclean, C., and Phillips, J., *The Sorrow and the Pride; New Zealand War Memorials*, Wellington, 1990, p.70

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'Russell Street' in honour of Sir Andrew Russell (1868-1960), the national president of the RSA between 1921-24 and 1927-35. Russell was a Hawke's Bay sheep farmer and British-trained military officer who, after serving time at Gallipoli, became the commander of New Zealand forces on the western front. He was widely regarded as an inspirational military leader during battles when many New Zealanders died in action.²

Hastings' memorial was part-funded by the Hawke's Bay Fallen Soldiers' Memorial Committee, which also raised money for a memorial in Havelock North. The Hastings memorial was intended to imitate the influential Cenotaph at Whitehall, London, designed by Edward Luytens and completed in 1920. Unfortunately the funding was insufficient and, although the design remained the same, the memorial was reduced in width.³

Constructed from Coromandel granite at 'the monumental works' at Napier, the memorial was opened on Armistice Day, 11 November 1923, by the wife of Mayor William Hart, in the absence of Sir Andrew Russell.⁴ Its full title was Hawke's Bay Fallen Soldiers Memorial.⁵



The Cenotaph at Whitehall, by E. Luytens on which the design for the Hastings Cenotaph was based.

<http://www.londonstills.com/mn0122.html>

As well as the very high commemorative value of the memorial, it has aesthetic value for its simple, solid form, well proportioned in the Classical tradition, and for the beauty of the Coromandel granite from which it is built. It is a dignified structure, eminently suited to its purpose, and it is complemented by the park setting that forms its backdrop. It is in authentic form, and in very good condition.

The Cenotaph has been the focus of war commemoration and memorial events in Hastings since its construction and serves as the war memorial for all overseas wars involving soldiers from the district.

² Pugsley, C., 'Russell, Andrew Hamilton 1868 - 1960' in *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, updated 16 December 2003 - <http://www.dnzb.govt.nz/>

³ Boyd M. 1984, *City of the Plains: A History of Hastings*, Victoria University Press for Hastings District Council p.210

⁴ Wright M. 2001, *Town and Country: The History of Hastings and District*, Hastings District Council p.356

⁵ Ibid.

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DATES:

Circa 1920: Fundraising for war memorials in Hastings and Havelock North commenced. (Cenotaph designed by Edward Luytens at Whitehall, England, completed.)

1922: Site surveyed (Deed 67, Hawke's Bay Registry)

1923: Hastings Cenotaph officially opened on Armistice Day by wife of Mayor William Hart.

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:

Architect: Not known, but the design is based on Edward Luytens' design for the Cenotaph in Whitehall (1920).

Builder: Not known, but C. Fawcett is recorded on the memorial as 'supervisor'.

Construction details: The Cenotaph is built from Coromandel granite; it is likely to have a reinforced concrete core.

Description: The Hastings Cenotaph has a simple obelisk form, rectangular in plan shape; it rests on a platform of three steps, has a base plinth, and a shaft that rises in a series of slightly reducing tiers to an overhanging cap with a wreath on the very top. The main part of the shaft has an inset stone on the west face with an inscription dedicating it 'to all those who gave their lives during the Great War'. Plaques on other parts of the shaft list the names of the 162 Hastings men who died in the First World War. It is a simple and sombre design, quite unadorned but for the moulded plinth and cap. At close quarters, the natural colour and texture of the stone, and the sparkle of its crystalline structure, give the Cenotaph aesthetic value.

The Cenotaph is of masonry construction, being coursed ashlar (the stone faces dressed and laid in regular courses), and the stone is Coromandel tonalite, commonly known as 'Coromandel granite'. It is marked on the bottom left of the west face 'C Fawcett Supervisor' and on the bottom right 'H B M Wks Napier' (Hawke's Bay Monumental Works, Napier).

The Cenotaph is set in a quiet corner of the city, surrounded by gardens and trees. A car park at the end of Russell Street serves as a forecourt. A flagpole stands nearby, and a low hedge marks off a space around three sides of the Cenotaph.

ELEMENTS OF ARCHITECTURAL IMPORTANCE:

Element	Significance
Building materials	Aesthetic significance
Plaques	Social and commemorative significance

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Maclean, C., and Phillips, J., *The Sorrow and the Pride; New Zealand War Memorials*, Wellington, 1990

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Wright M. 2001, *Town and Country: The History of Hastings and District*, Hastings District Council

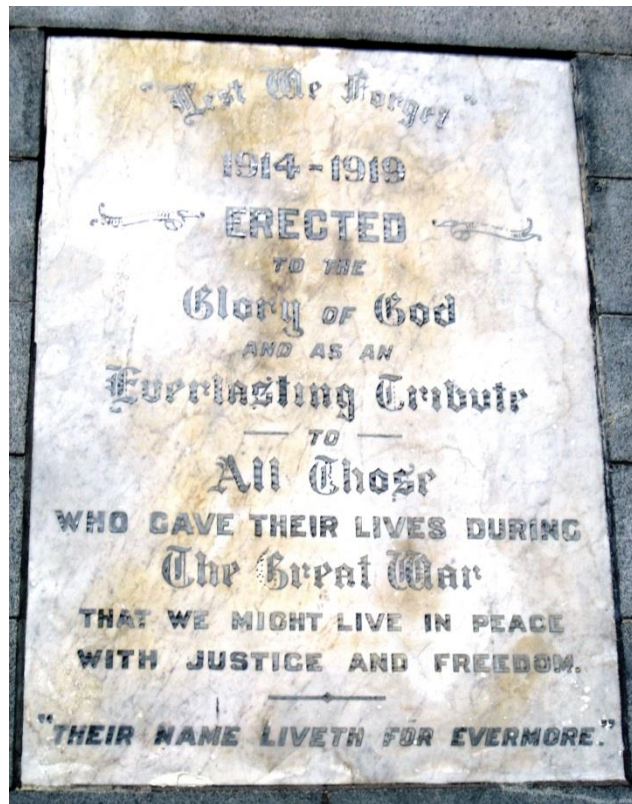
OTHER INFORMATION:

NZHPT Register: The Cenotaph is a Category II item (Register Number 1083)

District Plan Listing: Listed as a Category II heritage item in the Operative Hastings District Plan (declared operative 10 June 2003). Item number 55. In the Proposed Hastings District Plan, 2015, the Cenotaph is listed as a Category II heritage item (HB57).

Additional Photos:

Dedication plaque on Cenotaph (Photo: P. Huddleston, 2015)



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Cenotaph with surrounding gardens (Photo: P. Huddleston, 2015)



Original Plans c. 1923

