



GOOD CONSERVATION AND RESTORATION PRACTICE FICHE

Composed by working party of:

NEW ZEALAND

0. Name of building/ group of buildings/ urban scheme/ landscape/ garden & picture of before and after

Before conservation/ restauration	After conservation/ restauration
	

Depicted item: Ellen Melville Pioneer Women's Memorial Hall
Sources: Lauren Speer & Ann McEwan
Dates: 4 February 2014 & 17 December 2020

- **Data for identification**

current name: Ellen Melville Pioneer Women's Memorial Hall
former/original/variant name: Pioneer Women's and Ellen Melville Memorial Hall
address/ number(s) and name(s) of street(s): 2 Freyberg Place
town: Auckland
province/ state: Auckland
post code: 1010
country: New Zealand
geographic GPS coordinates:
current typology: Local government community hall
former/original/variant typology: Women's community facility
comments on typology: The central Auckland building was purpose-built to provide a facility for use by women and to honour the pioneering women of Auckland and Ellen Melville's success as an Auckland city councillor for 33 years and her efforts to advance women's rights in New Zealand.

- **Status of protection**

protected by: Auckland Unitary Plan
grade: B
date: 2013
valid for: whole building, including the exterior and interior, and its surrounds as well as the James Bowie sculpture.
remarks: Auckland Unitary Plan Schedule Number: 01960; Scheduled for historical, social, physical attributes and aesthetic values.

- **Accessibility**

opening hours/viewing arrangements: Parts of the building can be hired between 5.00am and 11.00pm, for community events and meetings, within the parameters set by council guidelines. The Ellen Melville Centre is a council-operated community venue that is open from 9.00am until midnight, Monday through Friday.

1. History of building(s)

- **Chronology**

Commission/ competition date: 1954
design period (s): 1960-61
start of site work: c. June 1961 – September 1962
completion/inauguration: 5 September 1962
restoration / conservation: reopened on 15 September 2017

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- **Summary of important changes after completion**

type of change: Sound system installed

date(s): 1963

circumstances/ reasons for change: poor acoustics in the hall

effects of changes: Following the completion of the hall in 1962, there were initial problems including the acoustics of the hall and traffic noise outside.¹ To address these issues, a sound system was installed for audibility. This change was non-intrusive to the hall's design.

persons/organisations involved: Auckland City Council

type of change: Air-conditioning system installed

date(s): 1974

circumstances/ reasons for change: Over-heating in the hall.

effects of changes: Heat loading and over-heating within the hall became an increasing problem due to the need to close the hall's windows in order to reduce noise rising from the street below. The addition of an air-conditioning system improved the functionality and comfort of the building for its users and at the same time did not impact upon the design of the hall. The cost of the installation was \$19,402.²

persons/organisations involved: Fisher and Paykel Engineering.

type of change: major redevelopment

date(s): 1996

circumstances/ reasons for change: The 1996 redevelopment was commissioned to resolve noise and acoustic problems associated with use of the hall as well as upgrade the facility as there had been little work done on it over the 35 years since its completion.

effects of changes: In 1996 Andrew Patterson Architects undertook a significant renovation of the hall. This included the complete redesign of the ground floor including the relocation of the main entrance to beneath the eastern stair landing. The main lobby was reduced in size, the James Bowie sculpture was relocated to the hall lobby, a lift was installed and replaced the men's toilet on the ground floor and changing rooms on the first floor, and the basement level was completely removed. Site works involved the enclosure of the open space under the elevated hall with glazed walls to accommodate a café (later a retail store), while the committee rooms, women's rest room and crèche were all removed. An extension on the western High Street boundary designed to contain toilets and extra storage space was modelled off the east stairwell. The first floor was modified with additional spaces next to the stage, carpet laid, and the original kitchen removed with the replacement kitchen and the Ellen Melville Meeting Room added in the west extension. Exterior works involved the insertion of new spandrel panels in blue glass into the façade, the recladding of the wall facing O'Connell Street in profiled aluminium, and the relocation of the Freyberg Place sign of dedication from the crèche entry to a wall opposite in the new public seating area of Freyberg Square.³

persons/ organisations involved: Andrew Patterson Architects

¹ Skinner, 'T. K. Donner', p.81.

² Matthews & Matthews Architects Ltd, 'Heritage Assessment for Ellen Melville Pioneer Women's Memorial Hall', p.7.

³ Matthews & Matthews Architects Ltd, 'Heritage Assessment for Ellen Melville Pioneer Women's Memorial Hall', p.11.

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2. Summary of restoration

- **Summary of important changes after restoration**

type of change: Restoration of butterfly roof.

date(s): 2017

circumstances/reasons for change: Weathertightness issues.

effect of changes: Maintained key structural and architectural element of the building.

persons/organisations involved: Stevens Lawson Architects; Auckland Council.

type of change: 1996 ground floor enclosure reduced in size.

date(s): 2017

circumstances/reasons for change: Partial reinstatement of ground floor treatment.

effect of changes: Largely restored original relationship between ground and first floor wall planes on principal elevation.

persons/organisations involved: Stevens Lawson Architects; Auckland Council.

type of change: Spandrel panels replaced in different colour.

date(s): 2017

circumstances/reasons for change: Design integrity.

effect of changes: Restoration of architectural feature on principal elevation.

persons/organisations involved: Stevens Lawson Architects; Auckland Council.

type of change: Restoration of tukutuku (woven) panels presented by Eruera and Amiria Stirling in 1962.

date(s): 2017

circumstances/reasons for change: In need of conservation due to age and wear.

effect of changes: Maintained and enhanced important cultural heritage fabric within the building.

persons/organisations involved: Orakei weavers.

type of change: Installation of relief sculpture 'Justice' by Lisa Reihana.

date(s): 2017

circumstances/reasons for change: Commissioned to celebrate and commemorate Ellen Melville.

effect of changes: Form of sculpture (scales of justice) references Ellen Melville's work as a lawyer. Set against Modernist-inspired patterned background painted by Nigel Roberts.

persons/organisations involved: Lisa Reihana (born 1964) and Nigel Roberts, artists; Auckland Council.

- **Current use**

of whole building/site: Community venue and meeting place

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3. Evaluation of restoration/conservation

Intrinsic value

- **Technical evaluation:**

During the later 1950s and 1960s, Auckland City Council architect Tibor Donner earned a reputation for innovation in his structural design and material choices; the Ellen Melville Pioneer Women's Hall is an example of this. The building is of technical significance for its reinforced concrete construction, crushed quartz and marble chip render, and the early use of aluminium window framing. The conservation work undertaken in 2017 involved structural upgrading to safeguard the building's future stability and seismic resilience; it was also predicated upon the recognised challenges Modernist architectural conservation can pose due to the use of new materials and structural design concepts. The conservation architects were assisted in their technical work by the file records about the building lodged with Auckland Council. The building was found to be generally sound, with water ingress the most notable issue that needed to be resolved.

- **Social evaluation:**

The Ellen Melville Pioneer Women's Hall is very significant for its social value. It is a rare example of a New Zealand building built to commemorate a significant local woman as well as for recognising women's achievements more generally. Further, it is an example of a post-war memorial integrated with a community women's centre, made possible through a combined council and community funding collaboration. As heritage architects Matthews & Matthews have written, 'the site has a long association with public buildings from the first Magistrates Court and Police Station in the nineteenth century. The construction of the hall demonstrates a growing consciousness of the relatively recent European history. It also commemorates the significance of one of the earliest practising women lawyers and local body politicians'.⁴ The conservation of the building signalled Auckland Council's commitment to the social heritage value of the building, its importance in relation to the open space of Freyberg Square, and its value as a community facility in the heart of the city.

- **Cultural and aesthetic evaluation:**

The Ellen Melville Pioneer Women's Hall is an important Auckland City landmark. The building is part of a series of key mid-century modern public works designed for the Auckland City Council by its own team of city architects. The hall's location in Freyberg Square also renders the building as a recognisable and well-known building within the central business district. The incorporation of James Bowie's abstract sculpture and the woven Maori tukutuku panels also demonstrate the design ideas of the time.

The restoration of the building involved reinstating a number of original features, partially through the removal of the 1996 café/retail space on the ground floor. The project demonstrated Auckland

⁴ Matthews & Matthews Architects Ltd, 'Heritage Assessment for Ellen Melville Pioneer Women's Memorial Hall', p.17.

Council's recognition of the heritage value of Modernist architecture and its own legacy as the client of this building.

4. Documentation

- **Archives/written records/correspondence etc: (state location/ address):**

Auckland Council Archives, 44-46 Lorne Street, Auckland 1010.
Archives New Zealand, Wellington, New Zealand.

- **Principal publications (in chronological order):**

'Ellen Melville Memorial Hall', *Home & Building*. 1 Mar 1965. pp. 88-89.

Skinner, Robin. 'T. K. Donner: The Architect'. BArch thesis, The University of Auckland, 1994.

Skinner, Robin. 'Disarticulated High Rise: The Auckland City Administration Building'. *Habitus 2000: A Sense of Place, Perth, 5-9 September 2000* (conference), Perth, 2000.

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Auckland Council. 'Appendix 1: Schedule of Buildings, Heritage Properties, Places, Monuments and Objects of Special Value and those subject to Heritage Orders'. *Auckland City Council District Plan Operative 2005 – Central Area Section*. Accessed February 7, 2014.

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Auckland Council. 'Appendix 9: Schedule of Significant Historic Heritage Places'. *Proposed Auckland Council Unitary Plan – Schedule of Significant Historic Heritage Places – Part 1: Historic Heritage Places*. Accessed February 7, 2014.

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Evans, Enid Annie. 'Melville, Eliza Ellen'. From the *Encyclopedia of New Zealand*. Accessed February 7, 2014. <http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/1966/melville-eliza-ellen>

Auckland Council. 'Community Halls'. Accessed February 10, 2014.

<http://www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/EN/parksfacilities/communitycentreshallsandhouses/communit yhall s/Pages/central.aspx>

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Public Art Around the World. 'Lord Freyberg Statue'. Accessed February 10, 2014.
http://www.publicartaroundtheworld.com/Lord_Freyberg_Statue.html
Architecture Archive. 'Andrew Patterson in Auckland'. Accessed February 12, 2014.
<http://www.architecture-archive.auckland.ac.nz/docs/block-digital/2007-11BlockDigital-PattersonGuide.pdf>
Auckland Council. 'Auckland Council GIS Viewer'. Accessed February 12, 2014.
<http://maps.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/aucklandcouncilviewer/>
Pipa Coom. 'Opening of Ellen Melville Centre and Freyberg Place'. Accessed January 25, 2021.
<https://www.pippacoom.co.nz/news/opening-of-ellen-melville-centre-and-freyberg-place/>
Auckland Public Art. 'Justice' by Lisa Reihana. Accessed January 25, 2021.
<https://www.aucklandpublicart.com/artworks/4005>
Stevens Lawson Architects. 'Ellen Melville Centre and Freyberg Place, Auckland'. Accessed 25 January 2020.
<https://www.stevenslawson.co.nz/projects/ellenmelvillecentre/>

- **Visual material (state location/ address)**

original visual records/drawings/photographs/others:
Auckland Council Archives, 44-46 Lorne Street, Auckland, 1010.
Archives New Zealand, Wellington, New Zealand.

post restoration photographs and survey drawings:
Auckland Council [as above]

Fiche report

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date of report: 4 December 2021

Examination by DOCOMOMO national/regional section

approval by working party co-ordinator/registers correspondent (name): Dr Julia Gatley, in lieu of Dr McEwan

sign and date: 4 December 2021

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examination by DOCOMOMO ISC/R

type of ISC Registers/Urbanism/Landscape/Gardens:

name of ISC member in charge of the evaluation:

comment(s):

ISC approval:

Sign and date:

Working party/ID n°:

date:

NAi ref n°:

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