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New International Selection
Full Documentation Fiche 2003

International working party for
documentation and conservation
of buildings, sites and neighbourhoods of the
modern movement

composed by national/regional working party of: NEW ZEALAND

0. Picture of building/ group of buildings/ urban scheme/ landscape/ garden



depicted item: Milford Kindergarten, Milford, North Shore, Auckland, New Zealand

source: Julia Gatley

date: December 2008

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1. Identity of building/ group of buildings/ landscape/ garden

1.1 Data for identification

current name: Milford Kindergarten
former/original/variant name: Milford Free Kindergarten
number(s) and name(s) of street(s): 14 Pierce Road
town: Milford, North Shore
province/state: Auckland
post code: 0620 block: lot:
country: New Zealand
national topographical grid reference: BA 32
current typology: Educational / kindergarten
former/original/variant typology: N/A
comments on typology: Purpose built kindergarten still functioning as a kindergarten

1.2 Status of protection

protected by: Listed as a heritage item on the North Shore District Plan
grade: 'B'
date: June 2002
valid for:
remarks: Item 249 on the District Plan. Located on North Shore City Council Reserve 17.

1.3 Visually or functionally related building(s)/site(s)

name(s) of surrounding area/building(s): The building is functionally related to other Auckland kindergartens designed by Group Architects and Wilson & Juriss. Others by Group Architects are Glen Eden, 1955-56; Oranga in Onehunga, 1955-58; and Belmont-Bayswater, 1959-60. Those by Wilson & Juriss are Mt Wellington, 1965-67; and Torbay, 1967.

visual relations: None of these are visually related, as all are located in different suburbs.

functional relations: Same building type, similar scale, some standardised design elements although Milford differs in that it is the only Group/Wilson & Juriss kindergarten to have a gabled roof.

other relations:

2. History of building(s) etc.

2.1 Chronology

commission or competition date: concept drawings date from 1953; approval to proceed with the project was given in 1956

design period(s): 1957

start of site work: 1958

completion/inauguration: 1959 (opened 3 October 1959)

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2.2 Summary of development

commission brief: Milford Kindergarten was commissioned by and built for the Auckland Kindergarten Association (AKA). The earliest correspondence located to date between the AKA and Group Architects is from October 1953, when the AKA requested the architects to begin preparing sketch plans for the Milford Kindergarten building.¹ This was not the first one to be built, however, as it was 1956 before the Takapuna Borough Council granted the Pierce Road site for the Milford building. The first kindergarten to be designed and built was Glen Eden. The drawings for Milford date from 1957.

design brief: The AKA required each of its Group/Wilson & Juriss designed kindergartens to have two playrooms. It also specified a maximum staff to children ratio of 1:20 for each playroom. The buildings, therefore, were designed to accommodate up to 40 children. A string of service spaces was also required (kitchen, staff office, staff toilet, children's toilets, children's locker room).²

building/construction: Single storeyed, timber sub-floor, timber framed, predominantly clad with vertical board and batten, asbestos cement roofing.

completed situation: The building was built at the southern end of a cul-de-sac within a suburb of predominantly detached houses. Some of the area's 1910s and 1920s bungalows remain extant. The area experienced development in the 1950s and 1960s, anticipating and also following the 1959 completion of the Auckland Harbour Bridge. During the 1970s, many of the older houses were replaced by two-storey multi-units dwellings. Since 1980, the remaining detached house sites have been subdivided with high value single dwellings built on the rear. The kindergarten site slopes down towards the south, where a carpark neighbours it. Beyond the carpark is bush and, in turn, Lake Pupuke, although because of the bush, the lake is not visible from the kindergarten.

original situation or character of site: It is a domestic-scaled building with a suburban location and a street frontage. Early drawings show the building was to be located in the centre of the site, possibly to preserve existing trees on the site, or to provide the drainage fall required. The as-built location was closer to the rear (east) of its site, creating a larger outdoor play space on the west of the building.

2.3 Relevant persons/organisations

original owner(s)/patron(s): Auckland Kindergarten Association (AKA)
architect(s): Group Architects
landscape/garden designer(s): Not known
other designer(s): None known
consulting engineer(s): Not known
building contractor(s): Not known

2.4 Other persons or events associated with the building(s)/site

name(s): Mrs Dean Eyre

association: She had campaigned and been an active fundraiser for the building since 1948 and opened the building 3 October 1959.

event(s): nil

period: Inauguration

¹ See UoA Arch Archive, Milford Kindergarten File in Group Box 7.

² 'Two Auckland Kindergartens', *Home and Building*, vol. 23, no. 6, November 1960, p. 71.

2.5 Summary of important changes after completion

type of change: alteration/renovation/restoration/extension/other: A timber lean-to has been added in the south-east corner. The office in the north-west corner has been extended to the west by approximately 800 mm. All timber joinery has been replaced by aluminium except for the gable end high lights. Asbestos cement roofing has been replaced with corrugated, pre-painted steel. A ridge vent and clear skylights have been added. The roof plane has been extended to cover the whole of the entry space. The exterior wall has been moved halfway between its original location and the general exterior wall line. A canvas awning has been installed in front of the main entry, on the west side of the building. The exterior was originally stained dark brown and is now painted in cream. Interior timbers have also been painted. Some interior partitions have been altered and services updated

date(s): Not known

Circumstances / reasons for change: Small additions for additional space; updating of services for ease of use and presumably changing health and safety requirements

effects of changes: Cosmetic, although the use of unpainted timber was important in the Group's work and it is unfortunate that interior timbers have been painted

persons/organisations involved: Not known

3. Description of building(s) etc.

3.1 Site/building character

Summarize main character and give notes on surviving site/building(s)/part(s) of area.

If a site: principle features and zones of influence; main elements in spatial composition.

If a building: main features, construction and materials.

Milford Kindergarten has a deep rectilinear footprint with a recessed entry bay on the west side, producing an overall U-shape in plan. The roof is gabled, with the ridge running in the building's long direction. As specified by the AKA, the building was given two playroom spaces, which are at right angles to each other but in all other ways are completely open to each other. Service spaces were located in two of the four corners of the building. A comparatively narrow site, combined with the client's desire for a large outdoor play area, explain the short, deep footprint, which almost fills the east end of its site and leaves the west end available for outdoor play.

The Group and Wilson & Juriss' other kindergarten buildings were all given narrow rather than deep plans, with skillion roofs or shallow asymmetric gables with centrally-located clerestories. Early drawings show that these elements were proposed for Milford. The deep plan and gabled roof seem to have been favoured by the client. These elements characterised the early houses that the Group had designed on the North Shore from 1949 and mean that Milford is more like these early houses than the other kindergarten buildings are. But the decision to revert to narrower plans for the subsequent buildings demonstrates that this was the preferred arrangement. In all, exposed rafters and sloping ceilings were a key element of the interiors, said to keep them 'interesting and airy'.³ The rafters are supported on posts and are cantilevered to join at the ridge with no expressed or visible junction, contributing to the modernist idea of fluid space.

Home and Building records that the Group treated the design of kindergarten buildings 'as a piece of equipment, a shelter to be used when activities cannot proceed in the open'.⁴ In some cases, concrete slab floors were used to minimise changes in level between the outside ground and the

³ 'Two Auckland Kindergartens', p. 72.

⁴ 'Two Auckland Kindergartens', p. 70.

inside floor.⁵ When forced indoors, activity zones were a key aspect of the playrooms, with the architects consciously creating additional corners in each, where the children could cluster together for particular activities.⁶ At Milford, the zones were identified as: 'the block corner, the dollies' corner, the music corner, the painting corner and the reading corner and in each the children can concentrate undisturbed by the activities in the other areas'.⁷

Finally, effort was made to reduce the height of fittings and fixtures to respond to a child's scale. This included children's toilet facilities, with low screens between lockers and toilets for maximum adult supervision.⁸ Consideration to a child's scale extended to building elements where practicable, with the height of exterior walls under the eaves, for example, being lowered to the minimum allowable (6' 9").⁹

3.2 Current use

of whole building/site: Kindergarten

of principal components (*if applicable*): Kindergarten with outdoor play area; gabled roof; open play areas; exposed rafters

comments: The gabled roof with exposed rafters above an open plan interior was typical of Group houses and other buildings of the 1950s. Their kindergartens were not unlike houses, being of domestic scale in suburban areas, with open living areas of houses adapted for use as open play areas within kindergartens.

3.3 Present (physical) condition

of whole building/site: Well maintained

of principal components (*if applicable*): Well maintained

of other elements (*if applicable*): The rafters have been painted

of surrounding area (*if applicable*): Low-to-medium density suburban

comments:

3.4 Note(s) on context, indicating potential developments

Indicate, if known, potential developments relevant for the conservation/threats of the building/site

None known

4. Evaluation

Give the scientific reasons for selection for DOCOMOMO documentation

Intrinsic value

4.1 technical evaluation:

As discussed below, Group Architects rejected the clean lines and flat roofs of international modernism and instead developed and promoted a locally specific or regional modernism – a New Zealand modernism. Timber construction and the gabled roof were important aspects of this because

⁵ 'Two Auckland Kindergartens', p. 71.

⁶ 'Two Auckland Kindergartens', p. 71.

⁷ 'Milford Kindergarten Opening Ends 11 Year Long Campaign', *North Shore Times*, 30 September 1959, p. 2.

⁸ 'Two Auckland Kindergartens', p. 71.

⁹ 'Two Auckland Kindergartens', p. 72.

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they were derived from and consistent with New Zealand's own building traditions. In addition, the Group pursued efficiency in both spatial planning and the use of materials, with timber sizes pushed to the minimum dimensions possible and spans and spacings between consecutive members to the maximum distances. These strategies were most frequently deployed in domestic architecture, and were adapted here to kindergarten architecture.

4.2. social evaluation:

Though initially conceptualised and established as welfare agencies in working class areas, the kindergarten was increasingly accepted as a norm in the first half of the twentieth century, providing educational pre-school activity. The Auckland Kindergarten Association (AKA), formed in 1908, was responsible for commissioning most of those in Greater Auckland, although Torbay Kindergarten fell within the bounds of the East Coast Bays Kindergarten Association. Recognising the importance of kindergarten facilities, the Department of Education introduced sweeping changes in 1948, including the government's acceptance of responsibility for paying the salaries of kindergarten teachers; the introduction of a diploma in kindergarten teaching; a maximum teacher-child ratio of 1:20; minimum standards for buildings and equipment; and the subsidising of new buildings and equipment at the rate of £2 for £1.¹⁰ Other changes followed. In 1952, the Department required that new kindergartens be built on quarter acre sites (i.e. typical suburban plots of land) and, in 1958, that kindergartens be established in purpose-built buildings and kindergarten teachers have at least three years of secondary school education.¹¹

New kindergarten buildings followed these developments, but perhaps not at the rate that may have been expected. For example, in his 75th anniversary history of the AKA, Brian Marshall made the comment that:

The most notable feature of the 1950s and 1960s was the small number of new kindergartens that were opened. From 1950 to 1955 only seven new kindergartens were established, from 1956 to 1960 there were none (although five were reopened), and throughout the decade of the sixties only nine new kindergartens came into existence.¹²

The reason cited for what was a comparatively small number of new kindergartens throughout the 1950s and '60s – approximately one a year – was the inadequate number of kindergarten teachers to staff a greater number of facilities, and it was not until the 1970s that the AKA was able to open an increased number of new facilities in Greater Auckland, opening at least 21 kindergartens that decade,¹³ a substantial increase from the numbers of the 1950s and '60s.

The five kindergartens that the Group and Wilson & Juriss produced for the AKA all fit into the category of pre-existing kindergartens, with earlier facilities closed for a period because of staffing shortages and/or inadequate accommodation and then re-opened in new premises once they were complete.¹⁴ Torbay too was first formed in 1956, taking some ten years to raise the funds for its 1967 building.¹⁵

4.3. cultural and aesthetic evaluation:

The Group earned an important place in New Zealand architectural history as much by their own writing and propaganda as by their built work. As second year architecture students in 1946, they wrote a constitution and published a manifesto and the first (and only) issue of a magazine, *Planning*.

¹⁰ Helen Downer, *Seventy-five Years of Free Kindergartens in New Zealand 1889-1964*, Rotorua Printers, Rotorua, 1964, p. 104.

¹¹ Judith Duncan, *Leaders in Education Since 1908: Moving with the Times; 100 Years of the Auckland Kindergarten Association*, Auckland Kindergarten Association, Auckland, 2008, p. 49.

¹² Brian Marshall, *A History of the Auckland Kindergarten Association*, Auckland Kindergarten Association, Auckland, 1983, p. 49.

¹³ Marshall, *A History of the Auckland Kindergarten Association*, p. 49.

¹⁴ Marshall, *A History of the Auckland Kindergarten Association*, pp. 69, 80, 94, 96, 101.

¹⁵ Downer, *Seventy-five Years of Free Kindergartens in New Zealand*, p. 86.

They argued that the slick boxes of international modern architecture were not appropriate for New Zealand's culture, climate and conditions. They promoted instead a locally specific modernism – a New Zealand modernism – an architecture with a lineage in Maori *whare*, settler shacks, back country huts and New Zealand baches (holiday houses); an architecture that would respond to the comparatively relaxed attitudes and lifestyles of New Zealanders, and an architecture that would utilise locally available materials, particularly timber. As graduates from 1949-1950, they designed and built their first houses, and it is houses from the 1950s for which they remain best known. Words like 'straightforward' and 'direct' were used to describe these houses; such attributes were celebrated. The young graduates pursued the publication of their houses, not just in New Zealand but also in the United Kingdom. The Group were soon associated with 'New Zealandness' in architecture. They practised under the name Group Architects for much of the 1950s. When Jim Hackshaw left in 1958, Bill Wilson and Ivan Juriss decided that two members no longer constituted a Group. They practised as Wilson & Juriss from 1963 until Wilson's premature death in 1968.

Even though they are best known for their houses, the Group produced a range of other building types, including shops, factories and kindergartens. The kindergartens are consistent with the houses in scale and form. Several of them have a rectilinear plan and either a mono-pitched roof or an asymmetrical gabled roof with a clerestory at the ridge. The Milford Kindergarten is believed to be the only one with a square-ish plan and a full gabled roof with glazed gable ends. The gable form was developed for the earliest of the Group's houses and is appropriate for use in a kindergarten building of domestic scale, located in a suburban setting.

Comparative significance

4.4 canonical status (local, national, international)

The Milford Kindergarten is an example of the modern architecture that was developed and promoted by Group Architects as a locally specific, New Zealand modernism in the 1950s. The Group were best known for their houses, but buildings such as this one demonstrate that they worked beyond the domestic. That said, the building is interesting because it is consistent with several of their key early houses in form, scale and materiality – it is recognisably the work of Group Architects. This form, scale and materiality were all appropriate for a kindergarten building designed for a suburban site.

Little has been written about New Zealand's post-war kindergarten buildings and without a body of literature examining broader changes in design, it is not possible to claim national significance for this building. At this point in time, therefore, only local significance is claimed, although this should be reassessed in the future when more is known about the development of the building type.

4.5 historic and reference values:

The Milford Kindergarten was built by the Auckland Kindergarten Association, which was established in 1908 and operated many urban and suburban kindergartens by the 1950s. The Milford Kindergarten Committee was formed in 1948 and for the first few years, sessions were held in temporary premises including a Baptist hall and a surf club building. Fundraising was soon started with a view to commissioning purpose-built accommodation. The Milford Kindergarten went into recess in 1952 because of the lack of permanent premises. In 1956 the Takapuna Borough Council granted the Pierce Road site for the facility and plans were drawn up by Group Architects. The new building was opened on 3 October 1959. It was one of several kindergartens designed by Group Architects that decade.

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5. Documentation

5.1 archives/written records/correspondence etc. (state location/ address):

Milford Kindergarten plans, GP123, University of Auckland Architecture Archive, University of Auckland, Private Bag 92019, Auckland.

Milford Kindergarten correspondence and specification, Milford Kindergarten File, Group Box 7, University of Auckland Architecture Archive, Private Bag 92019, Auckland.

5.2 principal publications (in chronological order):

'Kindergarten To Be Built in Milford', *North Shore Times*, 8 April 1953.

'Milford Kindergarten's Fine New Building', *North Shore Times*, 8 April 1959, p. 7.

'Milford Kindergarten Opening Ends 11 Year Long Campaign', *North Shore Times*, 30 September 1959, p. 2.

'Milford Kindergarten Officially Opened', *Auckland Star*, 3 October 1959, p. 11.

'Milford has a Kindergarten', *New Zealand Herald*, 5 October 1959, p. 14.

'Two Auckland Kindergartens', *Home and Building*, vol. 23, no. 6, November 1960, pp. 70-72.

Helen Downer, *Seventy-five Years of Free Kindergartens in New Zealand 1889-1964*, Rotorua Printers, Rotorua, 1964, p. 104.

Brian Marshall, *A History of the Auckland Kindergarten Association*, Auckland Kindergarten Association, Auckland, 1983.

Justine Clark, and Paul Walker, *Looking for the Local: Architecture and the New Zealand Modern*, Victoria University Press, Wellington, 2000.

Judith Duncan, *Leaders in Education Since 1908: Moving with the Times; 100 Years of the Auckland Kindergarten Association*, Auckland Kindergarten Association, Auckland, 2008.

Julia Gatley, 'Group Kindergartens: An Egalitarian Architecture', in Julia Gatley (ed.), *Cultural Crossroads: Proceedings of the 26th International SAHANZ Conference*, Auckland: Society of Architectural Historians Australia and New Zealand, 2009 (published on CD).

Julia Gatley, 'The Public and Urban Realm', in Julia Gatley (ed.), *Group Architects: Towards a New Zealand Architecture*, Auckland: Auckland University Press, forthcoming October 2010, pp. 146-76.

5.3 visual material (state location/ address)

original visual records/drawings/photographs/others:

Two historic photographs in G. L. Pitts, 'A Review and Assessment of the Work of Group Architects', BArch building report, School of Architecture, University of Auckland, 1968.

One historic photograph in Architectural Centre Collection, PA Coll-0811-07-13-2, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

recent photographs and survey drawings:

New professional photographs will appear in Julia Gatley, 'The Public and Urban Realm', in Julia Gatley (ed.), *Group Architects: Towards a New Zealand Architecture*, Auckland: Auckland University Press, forthcoming October 2010, p. 159.

film/video/other sources: n/a

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5.4 list documents included in supplementary dossier



depicted item: Milford Kindergarten, Milford, North Shore, Auckland, New Zealand

source: Julia Gatley

date: December 2008

6. Fiche report

name of reporter: Dr Julia Gatley

address: School of Architecture and Planning, The University of Auckland, Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142, New Zealand

telephone: +64-9-3737 599 ext 84656 fax: +64-9-3737 694 e-mail:
julia.gatley@auckland.ac.nz

date of report: 3 April 2010; revised 23 June 2010 following peer review by Kerry Francis

examination by DOCOMOMO national/regional section

approval by wp co-ordinator/registers correspondent (name): Dr Ann McEwan

sign and date: 3 April 2012

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examination by DOCOMOMO ISC/R

name of ISC member in charge of the evaluation:

comment(s):

sign and date:

ISC/R approval:

date:

wp/ref. no.:

NAI ref. no.:

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