



Library and Plunket Rooms, Egmont Street

1930

Use	Library and Plunket Rooms	Historic Value	3 out of 5
Materials	Brick, tiled roof	Architectural Value	3 out of 4
NZHPT Registered	Not registered	Technical Value	1 out of 2
Valuation No	12440-172-00, 12440-173-00	Symbolic Value	1 out of 3
Legal Description	Pt Blk XXXVII Town of Patea	Rarity	- out of 2
		Townscape Value	2 out of 2
		Group Value	1 out of 2
		Overall Cultural Heritage Value	11 out of 20
Reference	E2		

Description

The Library and Plunket Rooms building is Georgian with twin wings on either side of a porch supported by columns. The porch was originally the entrance to the lobby which divided the library into a newspaper room and library room. The windows have Lutyen shutters, an architectural style representative of the last decades of Britain's Imperial years. There is a clock tower above the main entrance on the roof.

Inside the building, the ceiling and upper walls are plastered, and the lower walls panelled in rimu. A brass plaque commemorates local settler Hunter Shaw who gifted the Library and Plunket Rooms to Patea.

History

The Library and Plunket Rooms building are part of the bequest by Mr Hunter Shaw gifted during the 1930s. The building was designed by the Auckland architectural firm of Gummer and Ford who designed a number of notable New Zealand buildings. The Patea Library is an example of Gummer's style even though it is one of his smallest commissions.

To the right of Library and Plunket Rooms building is a war memorial. The marble plaque in the centre of the memorial reads 'British South Africa 9th November 1900' in capital letters. This inscription puzzles local historians as the Boer War did not end until 1902. The World War I plaque underneath was moved from the original gate at the Patea Domain during the 1950s. Alongside this plaque is another plaque which reads 'Lest we forget. Erected in the memory of the honoured dead of three world wars 1899-1902: 1914-1918: 1939-1945. Those who fell in the wars from the areas of Patea, Whenuakura, Opaku, Patea, Kakaramea, Alton, Hurleyville and Manutahi.'

In 2001, the amalgamation of District Council services into one building meant the library would no longer be run from this building. Presently the building is under Council ownership and may be used for Council and community meetings in this area.

Architect

Gummer and Ford, about whom Shaw (1991) made the following comments:

*"New Zealand's most prominent architectural practice during the 1920s was that of **Gummer and Ford** in Auckland, which started its operations in 1923. Few New Zealand architects experimented with anything daringly new, although some of them, like Gummer and Ford, were to strip the classical forms back to their bare essentials in a manner which seemed to give them real life."*

Gummer and Ford designed the Auckland Railway Station (which also incorporates a clock tower), the New Zealand Guardian Trust Building (Queen Street, Auckland), the Dilworth Building (corner of Queen and Customs Street, Auckland), the Remuera Library, and Wellington's National Art Gallery and Museum. Gummer worked with others (as well as Ford on occasions) to design most of the country's largest war memorials including the Bridge of Remembrance in Christchurch, the Dunedin War Memorial, and as already mentioned, the Wellington Dominion Museum and Art Gallery.

Builder

Not known.

Sources

Livingston Baker, Patea Heritage Working Party
Shaw P (1991), *New Zealand Architecture From Polynesian Beginnings to 1990*
Hodder and Stoughton; Auckland

Date

January 2000
Information added in November 2002.