

St Matthew's Church, 206 King Street South

Inventory Number: 24; Property ID 21192; TRIM Reference: 21192#002#0007

NZHPT Registration Number: 7410

Report by Michael Kelly / Chris Cochran, August 2007; Final Audit 16 November 2012, Updated 2015 by the HDC
Environmental Policy Team

Hastings CBD Heritage Inventory Project



ST MATTHEW'S CHURCH, HASTINGS



Photo: P. Huddleston, 2015

LOCATION:

Street and Number: 206 King Street South

City / Town: Hastings

Location Information: Corner of King Street South and Lyndon Road West

LEGAL DESCRIPTION:

Legal Description: Lot 1 DP 415252

Certificates of Title (includes registry): 458556, Hawke's Bay Registry

SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANCE:

Architectural Value:

The building has great architectural significance as the work of three very important New Zealand architects – B.W. and C.J. Mountfort and Frederick de Jersey Clere, each of them working in the style, and with the materials, that they are best known for. The church is a dramatic example of the Colonial Gothic Revival style of the 19th century in timber, and the Perpendicular Gothic of the early 20th century in concrete. It is a convincing example of both these styles, both in its exterior form and detail, and in the interior, where the richness of the timber roof structure and furniture of the nave contrasts with the simplicity, even austerity, of the transepts and chancel. The church, most unusually, can claim national importance as an important representative example of ecclesiastical architecture of two important New Zealand architects, two distinct periods and two styles.

The stained glass windows make a significant contribution to the aesthetic qualities of the interior. Some of them, especially those by Karl Parsons, are important works of art in their own right, with international significance.

The townscape value of St Matthew's is high, with its distinctive, decorative timber and concrete form being prominent in the central business district of Hastings. The church sits amid open space and trees that contribute considerably to its aesthetic value and that of the city.

Cultural Value:

The church is an important building in the public consciousness, and continues today in active use. It has symbolic and cultural value because of its role in the spiritual and social life of the community.

St Matthew's has played a pivotal role in the social and spiritual life of the community since its construction in 1886. It is an important place to many people who have an association as parishioners, sometimes through the association of several generations of the same family. Some have the special connection of having been christened or married there, and have had family members committed for burial from the church; some are commemorated by bequests or plaques in the church.

St Matthew's remains a focus of Anglican worship in Hastings and is a place of great spiritual importance for the regional Anglican community. That importance is exemplified by the great care with which the church is treated and the respect it engenders.

Historic Value:

St Matthew's Church is a historically important building in Hastings, since the structure itself dates back to the 1880s and the parish grew out of the St Luke's outreach worship services in the late 1860s, during the earliest years of the establishment and growth of the town. The church was originally part of the Parish of St Luke, Havelock North, and then became the Hastings Parish of St Matthew in 1895.

It has been a focal point for Anglican worship in Hastings for regular and special services for over 120 years. A wide variety of people, from all walks of life, have been parishioners, and this diversity has contributed to the richness of its history. The building continues a

tradition of worship in the region which stretches back to the 1860s, providing a tangible link with early European settlement of Hawke's Bay.

Hastings has few major buildings pre-dating the Hawke's Bay earthquake, and fewer still from the 19th century; St Matthew's has strong rarity value as one of these buildings. There is strong physical evidence of the earthquake in the building in the reduced height of the tower.

Technological Value:

The technological value of the building derives from the main construction and finishing materials, both for the timber post and beam construction, and for the reinforced concrete. The concrete has particular value, as it is an early use of this material for a large church, which was pushed to its structural limits especially in the construction of the tower. The survival of the original drawings, which show all reinforcing details, greatly aids understanding of the structure, providing a benchmark in concrete construction in New Zealand in the early 20th century.

The building is in relatively unmodified form, and a significant amount of original fabric survives. (The main change in its long history has been the reduction of the height of the tower by some seven metres.) The building is therefore the repository of information about materials, techniques and building trade practice of the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

HISTORY:

St Matthew's, Hastings, the oldest portion of which dates to 1886, is a blend of the work of two notable New Zealand architects Cyril Mountfort and Frederick de Jersey Clere.

The first Anglican Church services in Hastings were held at Frimley, the residence of J. N. Williams, in 1869. By 1874 services had moved to the Provincial School, St Aubyn Street, and were conducted by the Rev. William Marshall, Vicar of Havelock North. In August 1877 the first Anglican Church in Hastings was opened. This church, located in Heretaunga Street West, was known by locals as 'Westminster Abbey' due to its two prominent towers. It was a controversial building and soon proved to be too small and the location unpopular. In 1878 permission was given by the Anglican synod to build a new church and vicarage. Land was donated on King Street for the purpose. The first Hastings church was eventually partially dismantled and used as a schoolroom for several years until destroyed by fire in 1898.

The present church was completed in 1886 to the designs of Benjamin Woolfield Mountfort (1825-1896) and his second son Cyril Julian Mountfort (1852-1920). Mountfort senior was Canterbury's first provincial architect and New Zealand's pre-eminent Gothic Revival architect. Cyril assisted in his father's practice during the 1880s and 1890s and eventually took over the practice after 1898. The Mountforts' design for St Matthew's was a simple wooden Gothic church. C.J. Mountfort was later called upon in 1893 to design the lychgate as a memorial to Rev. John Townsend and covered way extending out from the main door in memory of Mary Hobbs, wife of Rev. John Hobbs.

By the first decade of the twentieth century the congregation, since 1895 the parish of Hastings, had again outgrown the church building and in 1904 an Enlargement Fund was started. In 1906 Mountfort submitted a plan and estimates for an addition in the same style. The extension was put on hold as the Vestry decided that it needed to clear all debts before embarking on any building programme.

Although it cannot be verified, it is believed that there was a choice between building the church in brick or in ferro concrete. However, prior to the final decision, an earthquake led to the decision to build in ferro concrete. A Building Sub-Committee was formed in 1911. The following year Frederick de Jersey Clere, Diocesan Architect for the Anglican Church (since 1883), visited St Matthew's and drew up plans for an addition in reinforced concrete. Clere was a pioneer in reinforced concrete construction in New Zealand and his first ecclesiastical building constructed this way was St Mary of the Virgin, Karori (1911). Clere's design for St Matthew's, which was eventually accepted by the parish, is, almost certainly, the first Ferro-concrete Gothic church in New Zealand. The addition included transepts, chapel-chancel, vestries and tower. Clere's design also gave the parish the option to one day replace, the Mountfort portion with a Ferro-concrete structure. The tender of £5250 by J. C. Monk was accepted by Clere and the construction was supervised by William Busby, a young architect in working with Clere. Busby was later to die in 1917 on the Western Front and a plaque in his memory was placed on a pew at St Matthew's. The foundation stone of the addition was laid by the Rt. Reverend Dr. Averill, Lord Bishop of Waiapu on 28 January 1914, and was officially opened on 7 February 1915.

On 3 February 1931, a massive earthquake struck the Hawke's Bay region. At 7.8 on the Richter scale, the earthquake did huge damage and is considered to be the largest natural disaster to have occurred in New Zealand in the twentieth century. A total of 258 people died. Damage to St Matthew's was substantial, particularly to the tower and part of the roof where the addition joined the original building. Services immediately after the earthquake were held on the vicarage lawn. By April the services had returned to the church and a restoration fund was launched. The repairs, plans for which were prepared by architect H.G. Davies and estimated to cost £1750, were completed by May 1932. The tower was lowered by seven metres and the four central columns and roof arches were rebuilt.

Over the years the external appearance of the church has been altered with the concrete portion sealed with a paint system and the wooden portion stuccoed in order to blend the two portions together. In 1985 there was an extensive refurbishment and reorganisation of the interior, which included the construction of wooden screens in the Lady Chapel. The church has also acquired a number of chattels donated by members of the parish including well-known Hawke's Bay families, the Williams and the Russells. Perhaps the chattels with the greatest significance are the four stained glass windows in the Lady Chapel by British Arts and Crafts artist, Karl Parsons - four of only seven such windows existing in New Zealand. Elsewhere in the church are fine examples of carvings carried out by Bridgeman and Son of England.

Today the church continues to serve the Anglican community of Hastings. It is also used by the wider community and visiting artists as a venue for concerts and plays. Since the opening of the St Matthew's Diocesan Primary school in 1995, the church has been utilised by the school for school services, music, drama and break-up ceremonies.

St Matthew's, one of New Zealand's largest parish churches, is a significant landmark in Hastings. Historically the initial portion of St Matthew's is a rare nineteenth century survivor in Hastings and the building as a whole is one of the few remaining large non-residential buildings to survive the Hawke's Bay earthquake. Architecturally it is an interesting amalgamation of the work of several of New Zealand's most important ecclesiastical architects, B J and C J Mountfort and Frederick de Jersey Clere.

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:

Architect: B.J. Mounfort and C.J. Mountfort (1886); Frederick de Jersey Clere (1915)

Dates of construction: 1886 / 1915

Construction details: The main structural elements of St Matthew's are timber and concrete. Very simply, the timber portion of the church is a post and beam structure resting on concrete foundations; the nave is spanned full width by scissor trusses; infill panels and joinery are also timber.

The concrete portion is cast in-situ concrete, with steel reinforcing; roofs are concrete diaphragms (now mostly covered over with timber framing and corrugated iron cladding), while the floors are timber supported on concrete piles. Window tracery is executed in concrete, and doors are timber. The patterns of the 'off the boxing' concrete can be seen inside the top levels of the tower – in most places the concrete has been smooth plastered.

Description: St Matthew's Church stands in the Central Business District of Hastings in a mixed area of commercial buildings. Its grounds provide generous open space in this context, as the church is set back from both street boundaries of its corner site. There are mature trees, and an important monument at the corner of the site, the memorial cairn honouring those parishioners who lost their lives during the two World Wars.

The church is a significant local landmark in Hastings, being very visible from surrounding streets and the tower appearing in views from further afield.

Style: St Matthew's Church is a rare building in New Zealand, one constructed in two distinct stages, each designed by a different architect, of different style, and of quite different materials. The early timber part of the church is Colonial Gothic, a common style for 19th century timber churches in New Zealand. Its true character is disguised somewhat by the exterior now being finished in stucco, giving some textural similarity to the concrete part; it would originally have been sheathed in timber. But the steep pitched roof over the nave, the tall, narrow lancet windows, the timber barge boards and bracketing are clear indicators of the style. A particular elegance is imparted by the flare at the bottom of the roof slopes.

Inside, the nave is fully in timber – all structural elements (posts and beams, scissor trusses supporting the roof, rafters, purlins and braces) and tongue and groove linings are naturally finished timber, generally heart rimu. These elements combine to make a particularly rich and warm interior.

The later concrete part, 1913/14, is a revival of the Perpendicular Gothic style, the last phase of the Gothic style in England which ran from about the year 1360 for two centuries. 'The style is characterised by the stress on straight verticals and horizontals, by slender ... supports and by large windows.... The signature tune is the panel motif, which is simply an arched panel with the arch cusped.'¹

On the exterior, the columns rise from the ground through and above the parapet, giving a castellated appearance, enhanced by the bands of fluting to the parapet. The large windows in the chancel and the ends of the transepts have tall slim mullions and simple tracery, while the small lancet windows elsewhere have trefoiled heads, all these elements being in accordance with the Perpendicular style. The strong verticality of the style is particularly evident in the attached columns, while the tower, now reduced in height, was a very ambitious vertical element that acted as the focus of a strong

¹ *The Penguin Dictionary of Architecture*, Fleming, Honour, Pevsner, Penguin 1967.

geometric composition. Its reduced height gives a more compact feel to the building today.

Graphic interest is added to the exterior by symbols inscribed at the parapet of the sanctuary – alpha and omega, the first and the last, and two crosses.

The interior stands in stark contrast to its timber counterpart, the walls and ceiling being plain grey plaster on concrete; this surface has never been painted. Detailing is simple, with plain square vaulting to the ceilings and simple moulded trim to openings. This part of the church has a raw beauty and a soaring, open quality, quite different (and yet strangely compatible) with the nave. Its austerity is softened by oak timber panelling in the chancel, the colours of stained glass windows, and warm red carpet.

Concrete was a material particularly well suited to the Perpendicular style, since the simple, undecorated forms and plain wall surfaces were possible to cast in in-situ concrete, as were the unbroken full height columns.

Plan:

Despite the differences in the two parts of the building, the plan nevertheless functions as one and follows the traditional pattern of nave with aisles either side (the nave has porches on either side, taking the form of minor transepts, at the west end); crossing and transepts, and chancel and sanctuary. There is a Lady Chapel on the north side of the chancel, while on the south side is the tower, vestry and other ancillary spaces, with a choir vestry on the first floor above.

The tower houses the organ at ground floor level, and has two more floors above the level of the choir vestry, these spaces being accessible via a concrete staircase, integral with the structure, with the bell hung in the top space. Finally there is a ladder and a door out onto the roof of the chancel.

The main entrance is from King Street South, through the lychgate and covered way to the west end door. The door in the north transept is in frequent use too.

ELEMENTS OF ARCHITECTURAL IMPORTANCE:

Element	Significance
Fabric of 1886 generally	Architectural, aesthetic, technical
Fabric of 1915 generally	Architectural, aesthetic, technical
Lychgate and covered way	Architectural, aesthetic, technical
Stained glass windows	Aesthetic

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OTHER RELEVANT INFORMATION:

NZHPT Register: St Matthews is a Category I Historic Place (Register No. 179)

District Plan: Listed as a Category I historic place in the Operative Hastings District Plan (Plan declared operative 10th June 2003). Plan reference no H5.

New Zealand Historic Places Act 1993: This site has been identified as a potential archaeological site under Section 2 of the New Zealand Historic Places Act 1993.

OTHER PHOTOGRAPHS:

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Northern elevation, looking from the Parish Hall (Photo: Courtesy S. Hilton, 2012)



The covered way at the front of the Church on King Street (Photo: P. Huddleston, 2015)

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Photo: P. Huddleston, 2015



Palm Sunday & Interior Woodwork (Photo: Courtesy S. Hilton, 2012)

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Interior Woodwork (Photo: Courtesy S. Hitlon, 2012)



The Chancel area of the Church (Photo: Courtesy S. Hilton, 2012)

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The high altar during a Floral Festival.

The two long windows flanking the altar were found under the church during the recent Conservation project. They had been removed from the wooden church when the ferro-concrete addition was built, and stored, forgotten, under the church. As they were surplus to requirements, these two windows have since been installed at the Hastings Girls High School, which is built on land originally owned by the Williams family. J.N Williams was also one of the donors of the land that St Matthew's now stands on. (Photo: Courtesy S. Hilton, 2012)



The Lady Chapel with one of the Karl Parsons stained glass windows (Photo: Courtesy S. Hilton, 2012)

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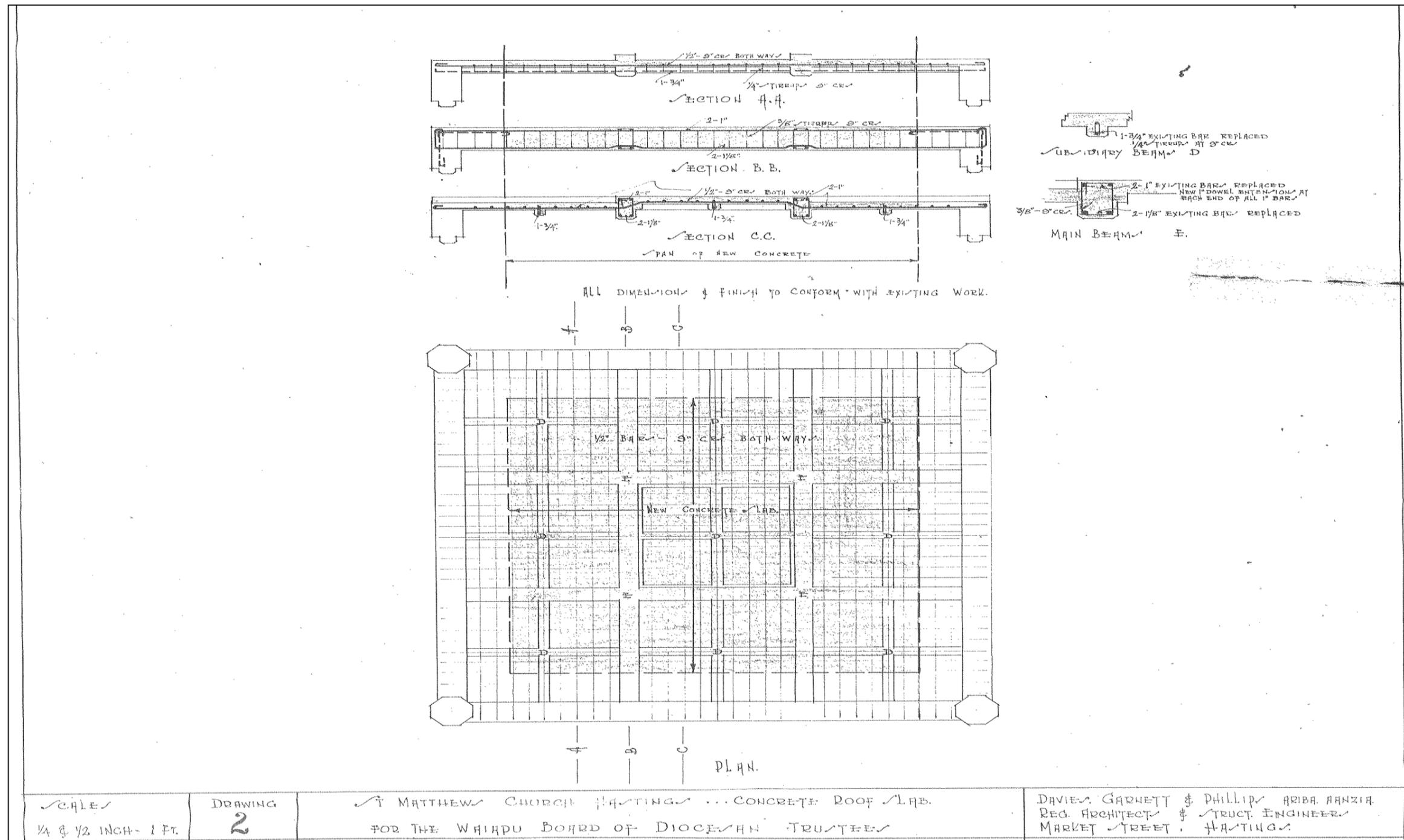
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Photo: P. Huddleston, 2015

ARCHIVE PLAN(S): The original plans for St Matthew's Church are now held by the Alexander Turnbull Library in Wellington.

Reconditioning of St Matthew's Church, Davies, Garnett & Phillips (1932) (TRIM Ref: 21191#0080)



SCALE
 $1/4$ & $1/2$ INCH = 1 FT

DRAWING
 2

ST MATTHEW'S CHURCH HASTINGS ... CONCRETE ROOF SLAB.
 FOR THE WAIRAU BOARD OF DIOCESAN TRUSTEES

DAVIES, GARNETT & PHILLIPS ARIBA AANZIA
 REG. ARCHITECTS & STRUCT. ENGINEERS
 MARKET STREET, HASTINGS

