

## Chinese Mission Hall

40-46 Frederick Street



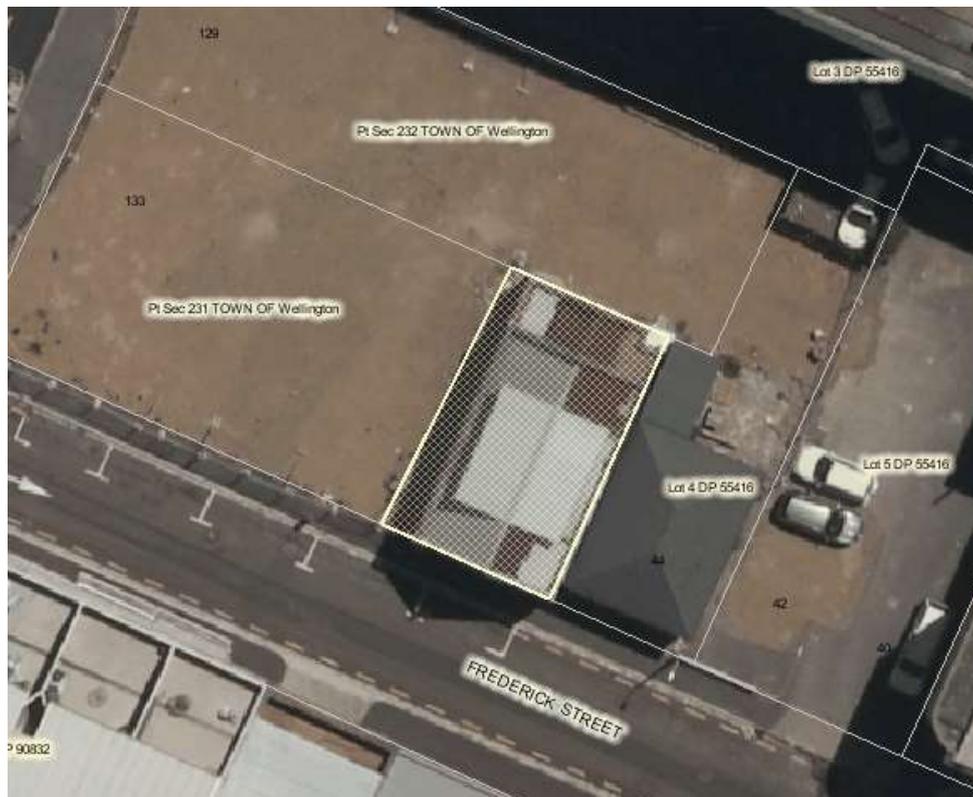
Image: *Charles Collins, 2015*

### Summary of heritage significance

- Built in 1905 and designed by Frederick de Jersey Clere, this building has architectural value as a Gothic Revival style church.
- The building has historic value as one of just two buildings associated with Wellington's Chinese community still standing in the Haining/Frederick Streets precinct, once the centre of Chinese life in Wellington in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. .
- The building has authenticity as its façade has retained a significant amount of its original fabric.

District Plan:	Map 16 reference 124
Legal Description:	Lot 1 DP 7326 (2001 Inventory) PT SEC 231 TOWN OF WELLINGTON (Cityview)
Heritage Area:	No
HPT Listed:	Not registered
Archaeological Site:	Central City NZAA R27/270
Other Names:	Unknown
Key physical dates:	1905
Architect / Builder:	Architect: Frederick de Jersey Clere
Former uses:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anglican Mission Hall</li> <li>• Music venue</li> </ul>
Current uses:	Vacated (2012)
Earthquake Prone Status:	SR 174115 (124 Served – expires 15/06/2027)

Extent: Cityview 2012



## 1.0 Outline History

### 1.1 History

The Chinese Mission Hall is one of the few remaining buildings associated with the early Chinese settlement in Wellington which was concentrated in the Frederick Street and Haining Street area. This local 'Chinatown' was considered an area of dubious reputation, with its many small cottages separated by narrow alleyways. The houses of Frederick Street, however, were of a better quality than those of Haining Street. Along with Chinese grocery stores the street was also home to pakapoo gambling dens.<sup>1</sup>

The Chinese Mission Hall is a tangible reminder of the work that the Anglican Church undertook in the Chinese community in Wellington. In the 1880s, with the goldfields no longer offering substantial finds, many Chinese who had originally settled in New Zealand as miners began to move to the cities.<sup>2</sup>

The foundation stone of the Chinese Mission Hall was laid in 1905. The inscription reads:

*To the glory of God and the spread of His kingdom among the Chinese in this diocese this stone was laid by Frederick, Bishop of Wellington, December 6th 1905.*

The architect of the building was Frederick de Jersey Clere, a noted designer of ecclesiastical buildings whose motto was: *Designed in beauty, built in truth*. In 1883 he was appointed Diocesan Architect of the Anglican Church.<sup>3</sup> Recognising the danger posed by earthquakes and fire, Clere attempted to minimise these risks by designing the church as a wooden skeleton surrounded by brick.<sup>4</sup>

After fifty years of occupancy, the Anglican Chinese Mission eventually moved from Frederick Street. The hall was then purchased in 1956 by Ross Murdoch who owned the next door factory which produced Murdoch's Anglo-Indian chutney.<sup>5</sup>

From 2009 to 2012 the building, known as Fred's, was used as a venue for gigs and exhibitions held by the Frederick Street Sound and Light Exploration Society. It is presently (2012) vacant.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> David McGill and Grant Till, *Cityscapes* (Wellington: Methuen Publishing, 1977), 18.

<sup>2</sup> Manying Ip, 'Chinese - Later settlement,' Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, updated 26-Feb-10 URL: <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/chinese/3>, <http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/chinese/3>, accessed 9 August 2012.

<sup>3</sup> New Zealand Historic Places Trust Professional Biographies, 'Frederick de Jersey Clere,' accessed 2 August 2012, <http://www.historic.org.nz/corporate/registersearch/ProfessionalBio/Professional.aspx?ID=54>

<sup>4</sup> McGill and Till, *Cityscapes*, 17.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> History taken from: Adapted from: Wellington City Council, "40-46 Frederick Street," *Wellington Heritage Building Inventory 2001: Non-Residential Buildings*. (Wellington City Council, 2001), FRED2.



Chinese boys in Wellington with semaphore flags that spell 'China'. Seyip Association: Group portraits and photographs relating to the Anglican Mission Church in the 1920s. Ref: 1/2-168564-F. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand.

## 1.2 Timeline of modifications

- 1905 Mission Hall (00053:123:6848)
- 2003 Seismic strengthening of hall (00078:1352:102470)

## 1.3 Occupation history

- 1905 Chinese Mission Trust
- 1956 Purchased by A. Murdoch – occupancy unclear/unknown. Further research required.
- 2009 Frederick Street Sound and Light Exploration Society
- 2012 Vacant

## 1.4 Architect

Frederick de Jersey Clere (1856-1952) was born in Lancashire, the son of an Anglican clergyman, and was articled to Edmund Scott, an ecclesiastical architect of Brighton. He then became chief assistant to R J Withers, a London architect. Clere came to New Zealand in 1877, practising first in Feilding and then in Wanganui. He later came to Wellington and practised there for 58 years.

He was elected a Fellow of the Royal Institute of British Architects in 1886 and held office for 50 years as one of four honorary secretaries in the Empire. In 1883 he was appointed Diocesan Architect of the Anglican Church; he designed more than 100 churches while he held this position. Clere was a pioneer in reinforced concrete construction; the outstanding example of his work with this material is the Church of St Mary of the Angels (1922), Wellington.

As well as being pre-eminent in church design, Clere was responsible for many domestic and commercial buildings including Wellington's Harbour Board Offices and Bond Store (1891) and Overton in Marton. Clere was also involved in the design of large woolsheds in Hawkes Bay and Wairarapa. He was active in the formation of the New Zealand Institute of Architects and served on their council for many years. He was a member of the Wellington City Council until 1895, and from 1900 a member of the Wellington Diocesan Synod and the General Synod. He was also a member of the New Zealand Academy of Fine Arts.<sup>7</sup>

## 2.0 Physical description

### 2.1 Architecture

The Chinese Mission Hall has been designed in the plainest of Gothic Revival styles. The Frederick Street facade consists of a simple gabled parapet of moderate pitch, echoed by a smaller, slightly projecting gable over the central door. The facade is symmetrical, with lancet windows flanking the door, and three smaller lancet windows under the main gable.

This plain, utilitarian design has minimal decoration; the sole flourish is a five-pointed star in the apex of the gable. The front door has a simple fanlight above. The building was clearly intended to double as a place of worship and a meeting hall, and the interior reflects the simplicity of the facade, with a tiny stepped sanctuary at one end. The roof over the hall incorporates a clerestory of pivoted lancet windows, four on each side. The exterior brickwork is English bond, and has not been plastered.<sup>8</sup>



Clere, Frederick de Jersey, 1856-1952. Clere, Frederick de Jersey 1856-1952: Chinese Mission room, Wellington 1905. Ref: Plans-80-0866. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand.

<sup>7</sup> New Zealand Historic Places Trust Professional Biographies, 'Frederick de Jersey Clere.'

<sup>8</sup> Architecture taken from: Wellington City Council, "40-46 Frederick Street," *Wellington Heritage Building Inventory 2001: Non-Residential Buildings*.

## 2.2 Materials

- Double-cavity brick walls on concrete foundations.
- Internal joinery in the hall's chancel and porch is rimu.
- Ground floor joists and exterior joinery are heart totara.

## 2.3 Setting

Frederick Street is a narrow street, lined on both sides with a varied collection of light industrial, commercial and residential buildings of no particular distinction. However the Chinese Mission Hall building stands apart from its surroundings due to its Gothic Revival architecture. The rear and west elevations of the building are now visible since the adjacent Murdoch's Building has been demolished. Along with the Chinese Masonic Society Building (27 Frederick Street), the building has a historic link to the Chinese community, now dispersed. It therefore is a reminder of the former character in this part of the city.

## 3.0 Sources

New Zealand Historic Places Trust Professional Biographies. Frederick de Jersey Clere. Accessed 2 August 2012.

<http://www.historic.org.nz/corporate/registersearch/ProfessionalBio/Professional.aspx?ID=54>.

McGill, David and Grant Till. *Cityscapes*. Wellington: Methuen Publishing 1977.

Manying, Ip. 'Chinese - Later settlement.' Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand. updated 26-Feb-10 URL: <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/chinese/3>. Accessed 9 August 2012. <http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/chinese/3>

Wellington City Council. "40-46 Frederick Street." *Wellington Heritage Building Inventory 2001: Non-Residential Buildings*. Wellington City Council, 2001. FRED 2.

### Newspapers

*Evening Post*. Volume LXXXV, Issue 114. 15 May 1913. Page 2.

*Evening Post*. Volume LXXXVII, Issue 137. 11 June 1914. Page 8.

## 4.0 Criteria for assessing cultural heritage significance

### *Cultural heritage values*

#### **Aesthetic Value:**

**Architectural:** *Does the item have architectural or artistic value for characteristics that may include its design, style, era, form, scale, materials, colour, texture, patina of age, quality of space, craftsmanship, smells, and sounds?*

The building is designed in the Gothic Revival style by Frederick de Jersey Clere and features an interesting composition on its façade.

**Townscape:** *Does the item have townscape value for the part it plays in defining a space or street; providing visual interest; its role as a landmark; or the contribution it makes to the character and sense of place of Wellington?*

This building has townscape value as its Gothic Revival architecture is a significant contrast with the surrounding buildings.

**Group:** *Is the item part of a group of buildings, structures, or sites that taken together have coherence because of their age, history, style, scale, materials, or use?*

Along with 27 Frederick Street (Chinese Masonic Society Building), the Chinese Mission Hall is one of the few buildings that still remain from the period of Chinese occupation of Frederick and Haining Streets.

#### **Historic Value:**

**Association:** *Is the item associated with an important person, group, or organisation?*

The building is historically associated with the Anglican Church and the missionary work it undertook amongst the early Chinese community of Wellington. The building is also associated with its architect Frederick de Jersey Clere who designed over 100 churches for the Wellington Anglican diocese.

**Association:** *Is the item associated with an important historic event, theme, pattern, phase, or activity?*

The building is historically associated with the establishment and development of Wellington's Chinese community.

#### **Scientific Value:**

**Archaeological:** *Does the item have archaeological value for its ability to provide scientific information about past human activity?*

The building is located in the Central City archaeological site reference NZAA R27/270.

**Educational:** *Does the item have educational value for what it can demonstrate about aspects of the past?*

**Technological:** *Does the item have technological value for its innovative or important construction methods or use of materials?*

The building has technological value as it was designed as a wooden skeleton surrounded by brick which de Jersey Clere hoped would minimise the risk posed by fire and earthquakes.

**Social Value:**

**Public esteem:** *Is the item held in high public esteem?*

**Symbolic, commemorative, traditional, spiritual:** *Does the item have symbolic, commemorative, traditional, spiritual or other cultural value for the community who has used and continues to use it?*

The building has spiritual and symbolic value to Chinese Anglicans since it was used to help spread Christianity within Wellington's early Chinese community. As a hall that was also used as a church, the building has been the venue for many religious ceremonies. The building will also have cultural value to Wellington's Chinese community since it is one of only two remaining buildings that are connected with the Chinese settlement in the area of Frederick and Haining Streets.

**Identity/Sense of place/Continuity:**

*Is the item a focus of community, regional, or national identity?  
Does the item contribute to sense of place or continuity?*

The building was once a focus of identity for Wellington's Chinese community.

**Sentiment/Connection:** *Is the item a focus of community sentiment and connection?*

Since the Mission Hall is one of only two remaining buildings that are connected with the Chinese settlement in the area of Frederick and Haining Streets it will retain sentimental value to the descendents of Wellington's early Chinese settlers.

**Level of cultural heritage significance**

**Rare:** *Is the item rare, unique, unusual, seminal, influential, or outstanding?*

The building, along with 27 Frederick Street, is a rare surviving example of the buildings which were formerly found on Frederick Street when it was an area of Chinese settlement.

**Representative:** *Is the item a good example of the class it represents?*

**Authentic:** *Does the item have authenticity or integrity because it retains significant fabric from the time of its construction or from later periods when important additions or modifications were carried out?*

The building has significant authenticity as its façade appears to have remained unaltered.

**Local/Regional/National/International**

*Is the item important for any of the above characteristics at a local, regional, national, or international level?*

The building has local value in its historic role as a focus for Wellington's Chinese community.

### 3.0 Appendix

#### Research checklist (desktop)

Source	Y/N	Comments
1995 Heritage Inventory		
2001 Non-Residential heritage Inventory	Y	
WCC Records – building file	Y	
WCC Records – grant files (earthquake strengthening, enhancement of heritage values)		
Research notes from 2001 Non-Residential heritage Inventory		
Plan change?		
Heritage Area Report		
Heritage Area Spreadsheet		
Heritage items folder (electronic)		
HPT website		
HPT files		
Conservation Plan		
Searched Heritage Library (CAB 2)	Y	

#### Background research

Wellington Scoop, 'Farewell to Fred's,' accessed 7 August 2012, <http://wellington.scoop.co.nz/?p=43082>

Wellington Scoop, 'Fred's home for art and music closes its doors,' accessed 7 August 2012, <http://www.newswire.co.nz/2012/03/freds-home-for-art-and-music-closes-its-doors/>

Some curious looking musical instruments were used by Chinese at an entertainment given in the Chinese Anglican Mission Hall this week. Other contributors to the programme were Miss Jones (pianoforte solo) and Miss Simpson and Mr. Soultter (songs). Several games were played, and there was also a hat-trimming competition open to Chinese only, the winner being Mr. Jackson.

*Evening Post*, Volume LXXXVII, Issue 137, 11 June 1914, Page 8

#### THE ANGLICAN MISSION.

The Chinese adult scholars attending the classes held at the Frederick-street Anglican Mission, entertained their teachers and foreign friends last evening. Mr. Kwei Chih, Chinese Consul, presided, and Mr. Jackson, and Mrs. Wong directed the arrangements. There were games for both European and Chinese separately and combined, such as musical chairs, and other parlour games, also potato races (in one of which Archdeacon Harper came third). In addressing foreign friends the Consul said the social that he had been requested to preside at that evening was an outward expression of the love and high esteem in which the teachers of the mission were held by the Chinese scholars. He had not been in Wellington long enough to see for himself the good work that was being done by the mission, but he had learned from reliable sources that the teachers had from week to week sacrificed their valuable time and had gone to the mission regardless of weather conditions to impart to the Chinese a knowledge of English, and what was more important still, "a knowledge of that Great Book which can lift men to a higher moral than the study of any other book, and which has been the means of untold blessings to China. I take this opportunity on behalf of the scholars, besides speaking for myself, of expressing to you, teachers, my sincere thanks for the invaluable help you have rendered to the scholars of my country. I hope that they will reciprocate your goodness by taking advantage of their present opportunities and learn all they can during their sojourn here, so that when they return to their Fatherland, they may be able to impart what they have learnt to those of their fellow countrymen who are less fortunate. I have advised and will continue to advise those that have the leisure to do so, come here and learn what you have to teach them, and I am confident that they will receive nothing but good from your hands."

Mr. Kwei also addressed the Chinese in their own tongue.

The appearance of the Chinese themselves did them great credit. The men occupied one side of the hall and the women and children had a corner to themselves. The children entered thoroughly into the spirit of the proceedings. Refreshments were handed round, and a very pleasant evening generally was spent.