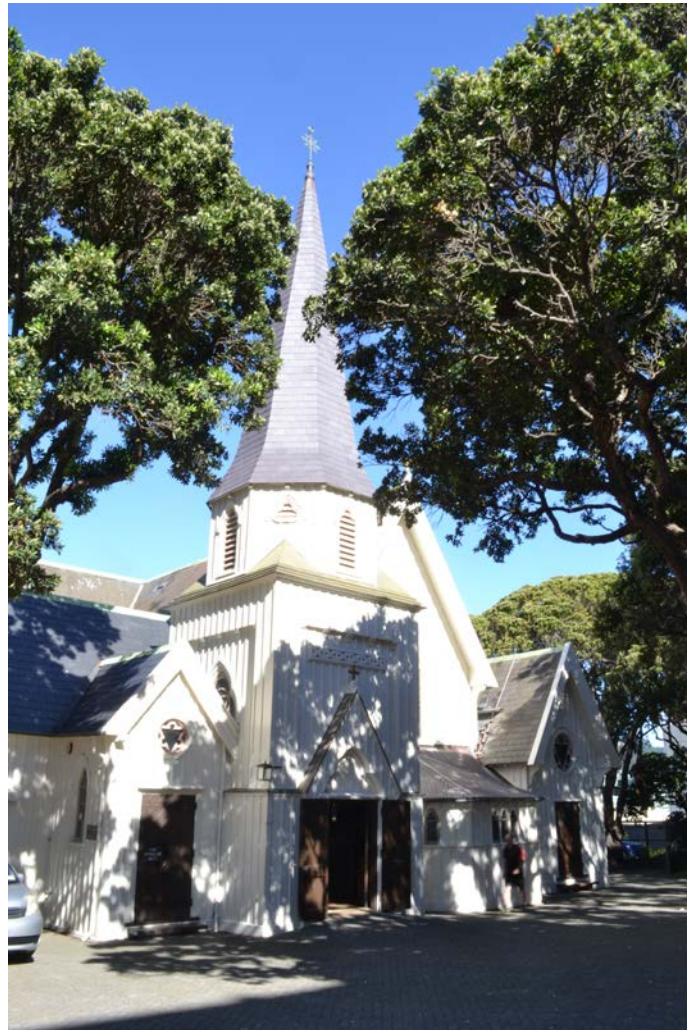


## **Old St Paul's Cathedral**

34 Mulgrave Street



*Image: Charles Collins, 2015*

### **Summary of heritage significance**

- Old St Paul's Cathedral is the finest nineteenth-century Gothic Revival timber church in Wellington, and one of the finest in the country. The cathedral is primarily a New Zealand adaptation of Gothic, built in Kauri, Rimu, Totara, rather than oak and stone. The detail of its styling may be derived from many sources, but the architect has created an original work of architecture of the highest order.
- This building was an Anglican place of worship for Wellingtonians from 1866 to 1964, and by the U.S. Marines who served in the Pacific during WWII. The building is considered to be the best work of architect and cleric – Frederick Thatcher, and the best surviving example of the work of prominent Wellington architect - Christian Julius Toxward. It is now a government owned building that continues to be used for special services, cultural activities, and as a tourist destination for visitors to the city.
- This building is held in extremely high public esteem – this can be seen by the 'battle' to save the building in the 1960s and its subsequent purchase by the state.



## 1.0 Outline History

### 1.1 History<sup>1</sup>

Old St Paul's Cathedral is one of New Zealand's most significant works of 19<sup>th</sup> century architecture. The cathedral is an outstanding example of Gothic Revival architecture adapted to New Zealand conditions and constructed in New Zealand timbers.

The church was constructed on land purchased by Bishop Selwyn in 1845 and augmented by a crown grant of Maori land by Governor Grey in 1853. The building was designed in 1862 by the Reverend Frederick Thatcher, an English architect and cleric who was the vicar of the St Paul's parish Thorndon at the time. The designs for the church were simple – a rectangular ground plan with nave and aisles. The front of the building was square with a small baptistery and an entry under the spire. The church was designed to sit east to west on the Mulgrave Street site, with the altar at the liturgically correct eastern end. The contract for the construction of the church took several more years to be completed; it was signed in 1864 by contractor John McLaggan, in the sum of £3472. The foundation stone was laid in August of 1865 and the church was consecrated by Bishop Abraham on the 6 June 1866.<sup>2</sup>



View across Thorndon, Wellington, taking in Old St Pauls, Wellington Harbour, and part of Mount Victoria. Taken ca. 1868. Ref: 1/2-010900-F. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand. <http://natlib.govt.nz/records/22805280>

<sup>1</sup> History based on Wellington City Council, "34 Mulgrave Street," *Wellington Heritage Building Inventory 2001: Non-Residential Buildings*. Wellington City Council, 2001.

Almost immediately following its construction it was realised that the church had little in the way of protection from prevailing winds. The parish decided to strengthen it using transepts. Architect Christian Toxward produced a set of plans for the addition of north and south transepts, but only the south transept was completed in 1868. The movement of the capital to Wellington in 1865 meant that the St Pauls congregation grew, and it was decided in 1874 that the church should be widened and the north transept should finally be built. Toxward prepared new plans for this construction. This was followed by the addition of a new chancel - this time with designs by draughtsman George Fannin - and in 1882 by the addition of a new choir vestry.

From 1883 onwards, Frederick de Jersey Clere designed a number of minor additions to the building including a porch to the clergy vestry, the south-east corner of the chancel and the south transept, and an extension of the baptistry. Shingles were replaced with corrugated iron in 1895, and in turn replaced with shingles again in 1924. Apart from an addition of a 'robing' room in 1944 this was the extent to which the church grew.

Efforts began in the 19<sup>th</sup> century to replace Old St Pauls with a larger cathedral. Even with numerous committees, enthusiastic fundraising, and the completion of designs by Cecil Wood, work on the replacement had not begun by the beginning of World War Two. In 1942 thousands of American soldiers sailed into Wellington harbour and many of those marines worshipped at Old St Paul's during their time in New Zealand. The 48 star United States flag and a 2<sup>nd</sup> Marine Division Marine Flag that hang in the church nave both commemorate this historic association.<sup>3</sup>

Construction properly began on the new cathedral in the 1960s and the debate raged about what this would mean for Old St Paul's. In 1964 the ecclesiastical functions of Old St Paul's were transferred to the new cathedral, sited just a block away, throwing the future of its predecessor into doubt. At this time, Old St Paul's became the scene of one of New Zealand's greatest heritage battles. Eventually the Government purchased Old St Paul's in 1967 and vested it in the NZ Historic Places Trust, which continues to manage it with support from the Friends of Old St Paul's Society Inc. The Trust and the Friend's worked on a restoration project that began in 1967, opening the church to the public again in 1970.<sup>4</sup> Two notable publications of this era were by Margaret Alington – *Frederick Thatcher and Old St Paul's* (1965) and *Old St Paul's Wellington: A Pictorial Record* (1968) for the Friends of Old St Paul's Society. And another was published by Peter Sheppard for the Ministry of Works- *Restoring Old St Paul's* (1970).

No longer a parish church, but still consecrated, Old St Paul's remains a place of spiritual significance to many and is living testimony to one of New Zealand's greatest heritage battles. It is a loved venue for weddings and other services, and holds concerts, recitals, and many other cultural events. For all of its aesthetic glory, the historical and social value of the place is extremely hard to underestimate.

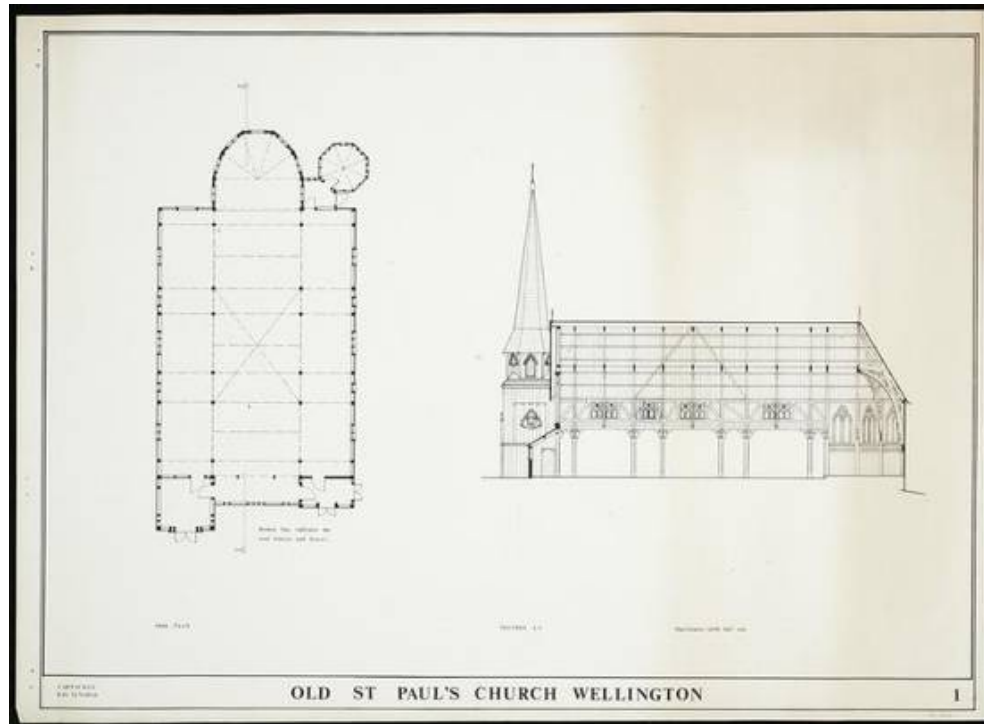
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<sup>2</sup> Wellington City Council, "34 Mulgrave Street," *Wellington Heritage Building Inventory 2001: Non-Residential Buildings*. (Wellington City Council, 2001), MULG 3

<sup>3</sup> Noel O'Hare, 'Heaven on Earth' in *Heritage New Zealand*, Summer 2007, accessed 11/04/13 <http://www.historic.org.nz/Publications/HeritageNZMagazine/HeritageNz2007/HNZ07-HeavenEarth.aspx>

<sup>4</sup> Wellington City Council, "34 Mulgrave Street."

**1.2 Timeline of modifications** (Original Plans could not be accessed – Provided is measured drawing dating from between 1959 and 1972 showing the 1866 ground plan )



1865-66	Original building construction
1868	Addition – South transept
1874	Additions and alterations – North transept and widening of church.
?	Addition – New Chancel
1882	Addition – Choir Vestry
1883	Additions and alterations – Porches to clergy vestry, south east corner of chancel and south transept, extension of baptistry
1895	Alteration – replacement of roof shingle with iron
1924	Alteration – replacement of iron with shingles
1944	Addition – Robing room

**1.3 Occupation history**

Not assessed

**1.4 Architect**

**Frederick Thatcher 1814 - 1890<sup>5</sup>**

Frederick Thatcher was born in Hastings, England, the youngest of four children. Thatcher spent his youth in All Saints Cottage and was baptised in the Church of All Saints, one of the oldest in Hastings. He possibly received some architectural training from one of the local architectural surveyors, but little is known of his formal education

<sup>5</sup> Margaret Alington. 'Thatcher, Frederick - Thatcher, Frederick', from the Dictionary of New Zealand Biography. Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, updated 30-Oct-2012  
URL: <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/biographies/1t92/thatcher-frederick>

At the age of twenty-one he was working in an architect's practice in London and from 1840 until his departure for NZ he lived in rooms in Furnwall's Inn, previously occupied by Charles Dickens. He joined the newly formed Institute of British Architects and was among the first fifteen associates. Among his contemporaries were the well-known Gothic Revival architects Pugin, Sir Gilbert Scott and R.C Carpenter. Thatcher married in 1840 but his wife died soon afterwards, and in 1843 he considered emigrating to NZ. He met Bishop Selwyn shortly before the latter left for NZ, but in the circumstance of that meeting are unknown.

On arrival in NZ he owned land, was an auctioneer, Superintendent of Public Works, Assistant Secretary to Governor Grey, acting clerk on the Executive Council of New Ulster, and Lieutenant in the Auckland Militia. After four years he decided to take Holy Orders and was ordained priest in 1853. He had never acted as a full time architect in NZ but as a clergyman his architectural knowledge was much in demand. He was married again in 1845, and once more became secretary to Grey, and in 1868 he sailed for England and retired in 1882.

Thatcher completed a number of fine buildings and churches. Some of his finest work is undoubtedly St Mary's Church (1846), The Gables (1847), both in New Plymouth and Old St. Paul's Church, Wellington (1865-66) At the time of his death in October 1890 he lived with his son, the Vicar of Bakewell, Derbyshire, and was buried in the Lichfield Cathedral.

## **2.0 Physical description**

### **2.1 Architecture<sup>6</sup>**

Old St Paul's Cathedral is the finest nineteenth-century Gothic Revival timber church in Wellington, and one of the finest in the country. The cathedral is primarily a New Zealand adaptation of Gothic, built in Kauri, Rimu, Totara, rather than oak and stone. The detail of its styling may be derived from many sources, but the architect has created an original work of architecture of the highest order.

The design of the original building was a simple, rectangular ground plan with a nave and aisles. The various additions, the north and south transepts, chancel and choir vestry, have taken away something of this simple design, but have been so skilfully integrated that they contribute to rather than detract from the character of the original design. The elements of the exterior – the steeple and spire, board and batten cladding, the hierarchy of pointed gables, quatrefoil and trefoil windows, trefoil arches and moulded bargeboards, superbly scaled baptistery and octagonal clergy vestry – all contribute to a composition that transcends the sum of its parts.

“The chief glory of Old St Paul's is its wooden interior.”<sup>7</sup> The scissor trusses of the roof, without tie beams, preserve the traditional Gothic lines of a stone-vaulted roof, and promote a visual purity and a sense of height. The richness of timber is everywhere apparent, from the beams to the Kauri sarking, and the detail is excellent, with fine carving on the pulpit and the ends of the choir stalls.

<sup>6</sup> Wellington City Council, “34 Mulgrave Street.”

<sup>7</sup> Charles Fearnley, *Early Wellington Churches*, (Wellington: Millwood Press, 1977) 12

## 2.2 Materials<sup>8</sup>

The original foundation blocks were natural rounds of Totara, the floor joists were mainly heart Rimu, with ground plates and stringers of Matai and Totara. The flooring was mainly Matai. Framing above floor level, and roof trusses, was Rimu, and the exterior cladding was Totara.

## 2.3 Setting

Old St Paul's is a landmark building in Thorndon and makes a strong contribution to the character of its surroundings. Despite the number of high rise buildings that are now its neighbours, it can still be seen from a number of the adjacent streets and the harbour. Its exterior is a complex composition of forms and its spire is highly visible.

## Sources

Wellington City Council, "34 Mulgrave Street," Wellington Heritage Building Inventory 2001: Non-Residential Buildings. Wellington City Council, 2001.

## Online Sources

Alington, Margaret. 'Thatcher, Frederick - Thatcher, Frederick', from the Dictionary of New Zealand Biography. Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, updated 30-Oct-2012. <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/biographies/1t92/thatcher-frederick>

Carnachan, Simon. 'Old St Paul's Church Wellington.' Ref: Plans-81-0614. Accessed 10/04/13, <http://natlib.govt.nz/records/22640273?search%5Bil%5D%5Bcategory%5D=Images&search%5Bpage%5D=2&search%5Bpath%5D=photos&search%5Btext%5D=old+st+pauls>

O'Hare, Noel. 'Heaven on Earth' in *Heritage New Zealand*, Summer 2007, accessed 11/04/13, <http://www.historic.org.nz/Publications/HeritageNZMagazine/HeritageNz2007/HNZ07-HeavenEarth.aspx>

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<sup>8</sup> Wellington City Council, "34 Mulgrave Street"

## 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?*

Old St Paul's Cathedral is the finest nineteenth-century Gothic Revival timber church in Wellington, and one of the finest in the country. The cathedral is primarily a New Zealand adaptation of Gothic, built in Kauri, Rimu, Totara, rather than oak and stone. The detail of its styling may be derived from many sources, but the architect has created an original work of architecture of the highest order.

**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?*

Old St Paul's has significant townscape value: it is a landmark building in Thorndon, it's setting amongst mature trees and its spire can be seen from many adjacent streets and the harbour.

**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?*

The building has group value with the adjoining house – Bishopscourt, the Anglican Bishop's Residence, and in a wider context with the new St Paul's Cathedral on Molesworth Street.

#### **Historic Value:**

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

This building was an Anglican place of worship for Wellingtonians from 1866 to 1964, and by the U.S. Marines who served in the Pacific during WWII.

The building is considered to be the best work of architect and cleric – Frederick Thatcher, and the best surviving example of the work of prominent Wellington architect - Christian Julius Toxward.

It is now a government owned building that continues to be used for special services, cultural activities, and as a tourist destination for visitors to the city.

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

This building is a site of significance not only for Anglicans and Wellingtonians, but for all New Zealander's. It is the site of one of the greatest heritage battles in New Zealand in the twentieth century.



**Scientific Value:**

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

This building was constructed pre-1900 and there was activity on the site prior to the construction of the church – archaeological protection HPA 1993. Maori site of significance M65.

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

There is educational value in this building as it is evocative of its time and place – it is constructed in native timbers, and grew in response to changing needs of the community.

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

There is technical value in Old St Paul's due to its construction and the materials used – its exterior is a complex composition of forms designed by several different architects and built at different times but remaining harmonious. The additions seem organic and add to the character of the exterior.

There is technical value in the interiors as well – being constructed in timber the interior maintains the forms of a Gothic stone vaulted roof.

**Social Value:**

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

This building is held in extremely high public esteem – this can be seen by the 'battle' to save the building in the 1960s and its subsequent purchase by the state.

**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?*

This building has significant symbolic, commemorative, traditional, and spiritual values not only for Anglicans, but for all Wellingtonians and New Zealander's in general. It has some symbolic, spiritual and commemorative value for its connection with the U.S Marines who served in the Pacific during WWII and for their extended families.

**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?*

This building is a focus of community identity and continues to be used for special services, for cultural activities, and as a destination for locals and visitors. The building is one of the oldest in Wellington and contributes to the sense of place and continuity of Thorndon and the surrounding city.

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

This building is a focus of community sentiment and connection – it has seen generations of Wellingtonians worship, be baptised, married, and buried.

**Level of cultural heritage significance**

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

This building has outstanding heritage significance – it is one of a small number of truly significant works of 19<sup>th</sup> century architecture in New Zealand.

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

Based on the Gothic style, Old St Paul's is an excellent example of a New Zealand interpretation of this style in native timbers.

**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?*

This building retains significant early or original built fabric and form.

**Local/Regional/National/International**

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

This is a nationally significant building. It is a much used and much loved church that has important historic and social values. It is a significant work of New Zealand 19<sup>th</sup> century architecture with significant townscape values – it is a landmark building in Wellington. The exterior and interiors have been restored to a high level and maintain original integrity and authenticity.

### 3.0 Appendix

#### Research checklist (desktop)

Source	Y/N	Comments
1995 Heritage Inventory		
2001 Non-Residential heritage Inventory		
WCC Records – building file		
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)		

#### Background research

*Insert any relevant background information into this section. This may include:*

- *Additional plans, such as those for alterations*
- *Chunks of text from other sources such as Cyclopedia of NZ, Papers Past*
- *Additional images*