

Sextons Cottage

Bolton Street Cemetery, 26 Bolton Street



Image: *Charles Collins, 2015*

Summary of heritage significance

- The Sexton's Cottage is a small dwelling, typical of its period, and is a now rare example of a cottage from its time. It is a survivor from the earliest days of Wellington and few buildings survive from this period.
- The Sexton's Cottage has significant historical associations. Built in the second decade of European settlement in Wellington it is one of the oldest buildings in Wellington. It has a long significance with one of New Zealand's earliest cemeteries. It is also closely associated with the Church of England and is the oldest surviving building associated with the cemetery.
- The cottage is held in high public esteem shown by the public effort to save it from motorway destruction. It was restored by the Ministry of Works, and now has its own advocacy group.

District Plan:	Map 17, reference 375
Legal Description:	Pt Sec 473 Town of Wellington, PT Lot 1 DP 25
Heritage Area:	Bolton Street Cemetery
HPT Listed:	Category I, reference 1427
Archaeological Site:	Pre 1900 building, NZAA R27/466
Other Names:	
Key physical dates:	Built: 1857
Architect / Builder:	Built: Charles Mills
Former uses:	Residential
Current uses:	Residential
Earthquake Prone Status:	EQ Not Necessary, Outside EQ Policy – SR 269343

Extent: Cityview GIS 2013



1.0 Outline History

1.1 History¹

The Sexton's Cottage, found in the Bolton Street Cemetery, and was constructed in 1857 by the Church of England. Eighteen acres of land had been set aside for cemeteries by the New Zealand Company in Captain Mein Smith's survey plan of Wellington in 1840. This included a small area set aside for Roman Catholic burials, but the main area was just called the cemetery, without any divisions. However, Bishop Selwyn requested that a piece of land be set aside for Church of England burials. The land was divided proportional to the number of adherents among them; the Church of England receiving about half the space. The Church did not consecrate their space until 1855 due to the fact that prior to the denominational division of the land, people of many different faiths had already been buried. By 1949 the dispute had largely been settled, with Bishop Selwyn agreeing to a 30 year period in which relatives of 'non conformists' already buried in the Church of England land could be interred there, provided their names were listed in a schedule. The Church's sexton dug graves and maintained the cemetery, but at this time the duties also included that of the verger of St Paul's, which was built in the Government Reserve in 1844, later replaced by Old St Paul's in Mulgrave Street in 1899. During the period of reorganisation of the land into separate cemeteries, the Church of England sexton looked after the whole cemetery until the public cemetery trustees appointed another sexton in 1857.

In 1857 the trustees of the Church decided to construct a sexton's cottage in the cemetery and a triangular piece of land on Bolton Street (part of town section 473), adjoining the cemetery, but not on the cemetery reserve was purchased from Robert Park, a surveyor, for £25. Work began in 1857 on the cottage, which was constructed by C. Mills, assisted by the soldiers of the 65th regiment, with the permission of Colonel Gold. Dr Gold, of the 65th, contributed towards the costs with a debenture of £122.

The sexton at the time of the cottage's construction, James Futter, lived in a private dwelling, so it is probable that the first tenants of the cottage were Edward Jupp, then the schoolmaster of St Paul's school, and his family. As Jupp was on site, he also had a key to the cemetery and kept the register of the graves. The Jupp family was followed by a labourer, R Watson, who lived in the cottage until the end of 1865, when Thomas Madeley, James Futter's replacement, took up residence. He was the first sexton to occupy the cottage. Madeley resigned from the sexton's position in March 1874 and Thomas Carr took over his duties and the residence on 1 April 1874.

William Mowbray, schoolmaster and organist at St Paul's, owned the land next to the cottage, and around 1875 developed Mowbray Street. At this time the land was re-surveyed, and it was found that the Sexton's Cottage was found to have encroached on Mowbray's land and so the trustees of the church acquired the necessary small strip of land. In 1885 another room was added to the cottage which modified the original symmetry, and Carr received a £30 grant towards the addition. This room stands out as an obvious addition, as there was little attempt made to integrate it with the existing cottage, although the narrow triangular site and small budget probably were also restrictions upon the options available.

¹ History adapted from: Vivienne Morrell, 'Sexton's Cottage (Former), Wellington', New Zealand Historic Places Trust, Unpublished Registration report for a Historic Place, 20 November, 2012.

In 1891 the cemetery had reached its capacity, and the government issued a closing order which disallowed new burial plots in all parts of the cemetery, following this only burials in pre-ordered or family plots were allowed.

The Wellington City Corporation took control of the cemetery in February 1892 and incorporated it into the public cemetery, whose sexton became responsible for the whole cemetery. Thomas Carr, whose performance as he had aged had received criticism, stayed on as the St Paul's verger until July 1893. He was still listed as the occupant of the cottage the following year, but by 1895 he had relinquished his tenancy.

Surprisingly the cottage does not appear on the 182 Ward Map, although the five houses next to it down Mowbray Street are visible. The public Sexton's Cottage is also not shown on this map, so it is possible that they were excluded as the city controlled the whole cemetery. When the map was revised a few years later the Sexton's Cottage was included.

From 1895 until 1920 the cottage, still owned by the church, was rented out to a succession of tenants. In 1920 the Diocesan Board of Trustees sold the cottage to Mary West, the widow of Rev. Dr West, a longstanding minister of the Terrace Congregational Church. The West's had lived one door down on Bolton Street for many years, and it seems that Mrs West continued to live at No. 24 and rented out the cottage. In 1927 the cottage was sold to Robert Spittal, a Wellington builder, who then sold it in 1931 to Jessie James, a 'spinster'. It was sold again in 1949 to Ellen Ward, another 'spinster'. Prior to Ellen Ward it appears that the owners did not occupy the house. Annie Dudley occupied the house from 1924 until 1937, and the next resident, Herbert Hynson, a carpenter, took up occupation some time prior to 1939. Ellen Ward was the occupant in 1955.

In 1968 the land that the cottage is situated on was included in the proposed urban motorway construction. The proposed motorway cut through the cemetery dividing it in two. Many of the headstones were moved and 3700 burials were reinterred in a mass grave near to the Sexton's cottage. The cottage site was not required directly for the progress of the motorway and was spared demolition. It appears that it was not known at this time that the cottage had once belonged to the cemetery sexton, as historian Margaret Alington rediscovered the history of the cottage. The Ministry of Works and Development decided to keep the cottage and restore it.

The restoration included the reinstatement of a considerable amount of fabric. New doors and fireplace surrounds were secured from demolition yards to replace the missing joinery, and the house was repliied and relined. A photograph from the early 1970s shows that a closed entry porch had been constructed around the front door, this was removed and replaced with an open porch with a gabled roof. The cottage was reopened in 1978 and handed over to the Wellington City Council. At the time a cemetery caretaker was the occupant of the cottage. In 1980 the Bolton Street Memorial Park was gazetted as a reserve under the *Reserves Act 1977* and the Sexton's Cottage and the land were incorporated into the reserve in 1989.

In 2007 the brick path around the building was lowered as it was raised above the lowest weatherboards and prevented ventilation flow under the house, which had led to deterioration. Currently the cottage is used for between six weeks and three months of the year for an artist-in-residence programme in collaboration with the Asia New Zealand Foundation, and for the remainder of the year is tenanted.

1.2 Timeline of modifications

- 1857 Original construction
- 1885 Building addition – bedroom
- 1950 26 Bolton Street, alterations to dwelling (00056:381:B29326)
- 1978 Renovations – reinstatement of fittings and joinery, removal of closed porch
- 2007 26 Bolton Street, dwelling additions and alterations (00078:2131:157136)

1.3 Occupation history

Not Assessed

1.4 Architect

Architect unknown – constructed by Charles Mills

2.0 Physical description²

2.1 Architecture

The Sexton's Cottage is a small cottage, typical of the period in which it was built. It is a now rare example of a building from that time, and of a type that was once an extremely common housing style in colonial New Zealand. Overall it is a vernacular interpretation of the English Georgian cottage, which became popular style for small houses in New Zealand. The front elevation faces north-east and has two six-over-six sash windows, one on either side of the door, and no decoration other than that provided by the gable forms over the porch. The later addition extends past the edge of the rest of the cottage and has no window on the front elevation, but has one on the north west side elevation and another facing the back of the property. The south east elevation is close to Bolton Street, set back 1.5m from the footpath behind a picket fence. There are two windows on this elevation, one sash window that matches those on the front and in the main bedroom, and one smaller window in the lean to portion of the cottage.

These cottages were a carpenter response to limited budgets, using readily available materials and styles with which they were familiar. The exterior of the building is largely original from 1885 when the additional bedroom was constructed. The interior lean to area was modified considerably in the 1970s renovation, but the remainder of the 1885 house has been retained largely intact. The use of pit sawn weatherboards reflects the buildings early construction date and the early technology used to work the timber.

2.2 Materials

- Timber
- Corrugated Steel

² Vivienne Morrell, 'Sexton's Cottage (Former), Wellington', New Zealand Historic Places Trust, Unpublished Registration report for a Historic Place, 20 November, 2012

2.3 Setting

The Sexton's Cottage is located in Bolton Street, just off The Terrace, at the northern end of central Wellington. The cottage is the last house on the right before a motorway over bridge. Opposite the cottage are two large houses, and on the corner of Bolton Street and 22 The Terrace is an 1866 house (HPT register number 220). The make up of this area is mostly tall office and hotel buildings.

The cottage is set in the remains of the historic cemetery, now known as the Bolton Street Memorial Park. It is surrounded by a white picket fence, and there is a small planted area to the rear of the building. A short distance away is the replica mortuary chapel.

Sources

Bowman, Ian. 'The Sexton's Cottage, Wellington: Conservation Plan', prepared for Wellington City Council/Ministry of Works and Development, Wellington, 1978.

Morrell, Vivienne. 'Sexton's Cottage (Former), Wellington.' Unpublished Registration report for a Historic Place. New Zealand Historic Places Trust. 20 November, 2012.

Wellington City Archive

00056:381:B29326 26 Bolton Street, alterations to dwelling 1950

00078:2131:157136 26 Bolton Street, dwelling additions and alterations 2007

3.0 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 Sexton's Cottage is a small dwelling, typical of its period, and is a now rare example of a cottage from its time. It is a survivor from the earliest days of Wellington and few buildings survive from this period.

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?

The cottage is located on Bolton Street and has a great deal of street visibility and appeal set against the trees of the Bolton Street Memorial Park. It adds significant visual interest to the street, which is otherwise made up of large office and hotel 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?

Historic Value:

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

The Sexton's Cottage has significant historical associations. Built in the second decade of European settlement in Wellington it is one of the oldest buildings in Wellington. It has a long significance with one of New Zealand's earliest cemeteries. It is also closely associated with the Church of England and is the oldest surviving building associated with the cemetery.

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

Scientific Value:

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

The Sexton's Cottage was constructed prior to 1900, making it an archaeological site under the HPA. The section is likely to contain archaeological material from the period.

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

The cottage has potential to educate the public about the colonial history of Wellington and the role of the sexton in the cemetery.

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

There is technical value in the cottage as a representative of an early colonial cottage and a good example of the carpenter architecture of the time. It has remained substantially unaltered.

Social Value:

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

The cottage is held in high public esteem shown by the public effort to save it from motorway destruction. It was restored by the Ministry of Works, and now has its own advocacy group.

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?*

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?

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

Level of cultural heritage significance

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

The Sexton's Cottage has rarity value due to its connections to the cemetery and with the early development of Wellington.

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

The Sexton's Cottage is an excellent representative of an early colonial cottage and a good example of the carpenter architecture and simple workers cottages of the time.

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 exterior of the cottage is in relatively authentic condition, having had few alterations since the 1885 addition. The interiors have been adapted for modern living and significantly altered in the 1970s renovation.

Local/Regional/National/International

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

The Sexton's Cottage is primarily associated with the early days of colonial settlement in Wellington and is directly linked to the cemetery in which many of Wellington's colonial settlers are buried; few houses are extant from this period of Wellington's history so it also has rarity value as a representative of the style. It has townscape value for the visual interest and contrast that it contributes to the Bolton streetscape. For these reasons it is of local importance. It also has the potential to provide further knowledge of the early history of New Zealand through the potential archaeological

deposits associated with the period, and the building can provide insight into construction techniques from the time. In this way it is also of National importance.

4.0 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*