

Wellington Cathedral of St Paul
Molesworth Street, cnr Hill Street



Image: *Charles Collins, 2015*

Summary of heritage significance

- St Paul's Cathedral is the principal Anglican place of worship in Wellington. It is a large 20th century ecclesiastical building that was built in an amalgam of styles over sixty year period - and these include historicism/Revivalism, Modernism, and Post Modernism. Although the building lacks the cohesion of its original design, it can be seen in the context of the prolonged design and construction process of ancient European Cathedral design - where the various parts of the building are ultimately reflective of the time in which they are built, the assemblage provides an insight into the history of the building.
- It is associated with the Wellington Anglican diocese, and is the culmination of a long history of effort and commitment by the Anglican community; nearly every stage of this buildings history was marred by controversy, from the original designs in the late 1930s to its final completion in 1998.
- The cathedral has high social value and is now the centre of Anglican worship in Wellington. It is regarded (at least in an official sense) as Wellington's most significant Anglican religious building.

District Plan:	Map 15, 18, reference 441 <i>Exterior only (the listing specifically excludes the interior of the Cathedral and all attached buildings namely the Lady Chapel, the Loaves and Fishes hall and kitchen, the foyer link (with toilets) between Cathedral and Loaves and Fishes, Brian Davis room and tool shed).</i>
Legal Description:	Lot 1A Plan 1991, Pt Sec 564 Town of Wellington, Lot 1 DP 9726, Lot 1A Plan 494
Heritage Area:	
HPT Listed:	N/A
Archaeological Site:	NZAA Central City R27/270
Other Names:	New St Pauls
Key physical dates:	Built: 1954-1998
Architect / Builder:	Architect: Cecil Wood, Robert Munro, King and Dawson, Warren and Mahoney
Former uses:	Religious – cathedral
Current uses:	Religious – cathedral
Earthquake Prone Status:	Not Earthquake Prone – SR 188480

Extent: Cityview GIS 2013



1.0 Outline History

1.1 History¹

St Paul's Cathedral is the third Anglican church of St Paul in Wellington. The first was constructed in 1844, and the second – now referred to as Old St Paul's – in 1866.² Initially, the church authorities had planned to rebuild St. Paul's and erect a cathedral as two separate projects, and members of the congregations left bequests relating to one or the other.³ In fact, plans for a new church first arose in the 1890s and each subsequent decade saw fundraising efforts renewed, but it was not until a site on Molesworth Street was purchased that the new church became more of a reality.

In 1937 the Diocesan Synod recommended a cathedral be built as part of the New Zealand centenary celebrations in 1940. The corner of Hill and Molesworth Streets was the preferred site, looking as it did over the parliamentary grounds and unsubtly reinforcing the association of the church with the state. The land contained small shops and houses, which the church started to purchase.

At the same time, noted Christchurch architect Cecil Wood was commissioned to design the new cathedral. Wood prepared his plans by travelling to European and Mediterranean cities. However, the presentation of the plans was just the beginning. World War II intervened and when this ended the post-war building boom delayed the project yet again.⁴ It was not until 1954 that the foundation stone, donated by Queen Elizabeth, was laid. In the meantime Wood had died (in 1948)⁵ and Wellington architect Robert Munro took over. He faithfully followed the original design but criticism of Wood's amalgam of styles grew.⁶ Munro himself died in 1959⁷ and was replaced by the long-standing Wellington firm of King and Dawson. By this time the cathedral as Wood had envisaged was unaffordable, and King and Dawson altered his design to make the cathedral more cost-effective.⁸

The building, completed only up to the first bay of the nave, was finally opened in May 1964. Old St Paul's was deconsecrated and the organ moved to the new church. There followed a long and sometimes bitter debate about the future of Old St Paul's and it was not until 1966 that that church was offered to the Government – it remains in the care of the New Zealand Historic Places Trust.

The Cathedral was steadily progressed in the following decades. During planning for the second stage of construction, between 1966-69, Wood's original design was reassessed. It was decided to build two more bays of the nave and a porch. This work was completed in 1972, the tower (markedly different from the original design) was built in 1982 and new bells hung.

¹ Repeats: Russell Murray, 'Wellington Cathedral of St Paul', (Wellington City Council: Unpublished report prepared for Plan Change 53, 2007).

² D. Kernohan, *Wellington's Old Buildings*, p.41.

³ T.N Coleridge, 'The Wellington Cathedral of St. Paul. A Progressive History', 1978. 2005-040-201: Wellington Cathedral of St. Paul Papers, Alexander Turnbull Library (ATL).

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ T. Hogan, 'New Zealand Churches since 1900'. Research Report for Arch 389, Victoria University of Wellington (1987), p.117. Wood's ashes are buried in the church.

⁶ The Architectural Centre strongly criticised the concrete "assemblage", trimmed with Swedish and Spanish Moroccan bricabrac, which, it said, gave the building the character of a "vulgar pre-war picture theatre". MS2278: Architectural Centre Papers, Alexander Turnbull Library.

⁷ Hogan p.117.

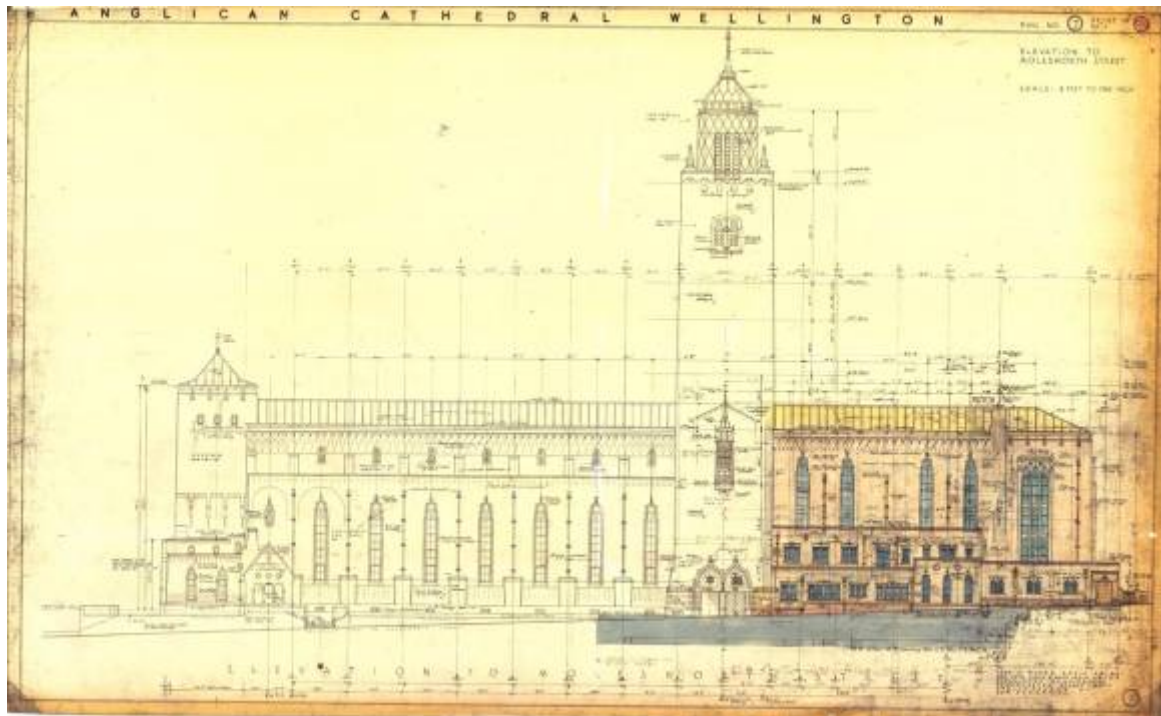
⁸ 'Statement of E.V Dawson, past principal of King and Dawson and past president of the New Zealand Institute of Architects', July 1998. Ms-papers-6707-1, ATL.

The tower received a NZIA Wellington branch award.⁹ The final stage of construction was completed in 1998 after another major fundraising effort.

The cathedral has been marked by the contributions of a number of architects, latterly Warren and Mahoney for the redesign and completion of the nave and porch. In a sense, the convoluted and difficult process mirrored cathedral construction of past centuries, which took a great deal longer to build and thus incorporated changing architects and architectural styles.¹⁰

Other features installed in the church were the stained glass nave windows designed by Brian Thomas and the Hutton windows by artist John Hutton. A Lady Chapel - the former St Paul's Church, Paraparaumu - was also incorporated in the body of the Cathedral. The Cathedral is very close to Parliament Buildings and since its completion has been used for many official occasions, particularly commemorative services.

1.2 Timeline of modifications



- 1956 21-41 Molesworth Street [2 Hill Street], cathedral, stage 1 (00058:3:C138)
- 1964 21-41 Molesworth Street [2 Hill Street], cathedral, stage 2 (00058:343:C14735)
- 1969 21-41 Molesworth Street [2 Hill Street], hall (00058:634:C29452)
- 1970 21-41 Molesworth Street [2 Hill Street], cathedral, stage 3 (00058:667:C30677)
- 1975 21-41 Molesworth Street [2 Hill Street], additions and alterations - retaining wall (00058:977:C42838)
- 1976 21-41 Molesworth Street [2 Hill Street], additions and alterations (00058:1074:C46588)

⁹ Kernohan, p.42.

¹⁰ Coleridge.

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- 1983 21-41 Molesworth Street [2 Hill Street], add bell tower (00058:1388:C62291)
1991 2 Hill Street [21-41 Molesworth Street], add chapel to cathedral
(00059:412:E21018)
1993 2 Hill Street [21-41 Molesworth Street], signage (00060:104:3813)
1995 2 Hill Street, plumbing (00061:74:12213)
1996 2 Hill Street [21-41 Molesworth Street], extensions to St Pauls
Cathedral (00061:230:17312)
1998 2 Hill Street [21-41 Molesworth Street], new toilets, basement level
(00078:142:42126)
2 Hill Street, fire protection upgrade (00078:2478:48245)

1.3 Occupation history

The Wellington Diocesan Board of Trustees – Anglican Cathedral

1.4 Architect

Cecil Wood¹¹

Born in Christchurch, Wood (1878-1947) was articled to the local architect Frederick Strouts between 1894 and 1899. He worked for a short time as a draughtsman with the firm Clarkson and Ballantyne before travelling to England in 1901. Here Wood was exposed to a high quality of architectural design in the Edwardian Free Style, and was employed by two leading Edwardian architects Robert Weir Shultz and Leonard Stokes. In 1907 Wood returned to New Zealand to take up partnership with Samuel Hurst Seager. The partnership lasted for only one year, and Wood set up his own practice in 1908. The years 1908-1915 were dominated by domestic commissions, but it was also during this time that he began his association with Christ's College, which included such commissions as Hare Memorial Library (1915), the Memorial Dining Hall (1923-5), Jacob's House (1931) and Open Air Classrooms (1932). During the 1920s Wood's practice began to expand and a Georgian influence can be seen in such works as Weston House Park Terrace (1923-4) and Bishopscourt (1926-7). A short lived partnership in 1927 with R S D Harman allowed Wood to travel to the United States while another in 1937 with Paul Pascoe allowed him to travel to England, Europe and the United States without neglecting his practice. During this second trip he made preparations for the design of St Paul's Anglican Cathedral in Wellington, which was erected after his death. During his life Wood had made a substantial contribution to the architecture of Christchurch, having an enthusiasm for both European and American styles.

Robert Munro

King and Dawson¹²

A Wellington based architectural firm that formed in 1948. The principal partners were Jack Ian King, Joseph M. Dawson and W. Keith Cook. The firm was highly successful with a high number of commissions and the establishment of a number of new clients. Cook left the practice in 1957 and it continued as King and Dawson.¹³

¹¹ Historic Places Trust, 'Cecil Wood', *Professional Biographies*, accessed 10 Jul. 13, <http://www.historic.org.nz/corporate/registersearch/ProfessionalBio/Professional.aspx?CPName=Wood,+Cecil+Walter>

¹² Historic Places Trust, 'King and Dawson', *Professional Biographies*, accessed 10 July 2013, <http://www.historic.org.nz/corporate/registersearch/ProfessionalBio/Professional.aspx?CPName=King+Cook+and+Dawson>

¹³ NZHPT 'Lower Hutt Central Fire Station', NZHPT Registration Report (Record no. 9319)

Warren and Mahoney¹⁴

Sir Miles Warren started a design practice in 1955. In 1956 he designed the Dorset Street flats in Christchurch, and in 1958 he began a long and successful partnership with Maurice Mahoney, winning a large contract to build the Dental Training School. The practice became known as Warren and Mahoney.

Quickly the pair's early work was seen as the birth of a Christchurch style of architecture – modern, concrete designs where the form (shape) evolved from the function and use of the building. The blocky, geometric designs that were built in exposed concrete became known internationally as 'Brutalist' style architecture – originally from the French term for raw concrete, Breton brut, but also used by some to describe a perceived harshness on the eye and the landscape. Sir Miles himself uses the term 'Constructivist'.

2.0 Physical description

2.1 Architecture¹⁵

The origins of the original design of the Cathedral are diverse and illustrate the diverse influences of Wood's travels. Sir Miles Warren, responsible for the design of the last stage of the building, the west end of the nave and the front porch, identifies influences such as the neo-Byzantine Westminster Catholic Cathedral in London, the Stockholm Town Hall, Moorish architecture, and the Spanish Mission style of southern California. Wood's amalgam of such influences may have been successful and appropriate for the time it was conceived, but it was however regarded as hopelessly dated by 1964 when the Cathedral was first opened. However, if one can consider the building principally as a work of the 1930s, it has significant architectural qualities that have accrued over time as the building has come to completion.

The exterior form of the building illustrates the variety of different stylistic approaches deployed by the various architects to the building over the decades, all kept in some sympathy with Wood's original design.

The building has a squat and heavy proportion in keeping with its mass concrete construction and is, but for stylised embellishments of a somewhat Moghul nature at the roof spouts (and gargoyles), window heads and balconies, quite severe in detail and appearance.

The main bulk of the building, built mostly to Wood's original design, comprises the chancel, crossing and the eastern part of the nave, and consists of a concrete box, stepped in two principal planes, and relieved at the lower level by regularly spaced tall and narrow windows. Roofs are hidden behind long horizontal parapets, with rainspouts let out into gargoyles set above and between the nave windows. Appended to the east, and centred on the length of the building, the bell-tower doesn't quite match the original building in style or detail (and is rather different from the originally intended tower design). It consists of a solid concrete shaft, relieved by a balcony at mid height and capped by a mansard roof over trapezoidal arches at the bells.

¹⁴ 'Warren and Mahoney,' Christchurch City Libraries, accessed 10 July 2013,

<http://christchurchcitylibraries.com/Art/Architecture/Architects/WarrenAndMahoney/>

¹⁵ Repeats: Russell Murray, 'Wellington Cathedral of St Paul', (Wellington City Council: Unpublished report prepared for Plan Change 53, 2007).

The last addition of the west end of the nave and front porch, although compatible in form and scale, depart radically from the original design in style and detail. The porch is set at the base of a tower of two high piers that lift above the nave roof, with a tall ornamental window between the piers. At the top, the tower is surmounted by a tall hipped roof, with a small balcony set just below the roof between the piers.

Internally, the overall plan form of the Cathedral is quite traditional, with a porch, nave, choir and chancel as one progresses from west to east. Although there are no clearly defined transepts inside the church, the nave has aisles on either side which terminate at the crossing arch; beyond the arch is the organ on the left and the choir stalls, while an ambulatory runs around the south side of the chancel and gives access to the Lady Chapel, an early timber church relocated onto the site in place of the originally intended Old St. Paul's.

The main space of the Cathedral is dramatic, and all the stronger, for the starkly plain plastered walls and the high and deeply coffered ceilings. The chancel is the focus of the composition and is well lit, indirectly but with some drama, from the sides, while the more subdued aisles are lit by stained glass windows. The nave, while backlit by the porch window, is considerably darker and gives further emphasis to the chancel.

The combination of the parts, while lacking the cohesion of the original design, nevertheless produces an interesting whole, and alludes to the prolonged design and construction process – not dissimilar to the traditional cathedrals of Europe – where the various parts of the building are ultimately reflective of the time in which they are built, the assemblage providing an insight into the history of the building. The Cathedral's landmark form closes off the northern edge of the Parliamentary precinct. Its textured concrete finish, coloured a salmon pink, is appropriate for the bulk and chunkiness of the building

2.2 Materials

Textured concrete finish
Timber
Steel

2.3 Setting¹⁶

The Cathedral is set on a corner site opposite Parliament. Its location, removed yet visually associated with Parliament, neatly symbolizes the long-standing link between Anglican Church and state in New Zealand. The front door of the Cathedral, set in the base of the porch tower, is approached from Hill Street by broad steps bisecting a grassed area. At the right (north) side, the site boundary is formed by Molesworth Street, and a grass verge and plantings separates the building from the footpath. At the south side, a large car-park isolates the small complex of service buildings (halls, offices, etc.) from the street and neighbouring buildings.

The nearby setting includes, along Hill Street, the complex of Catholic buildings, including St Mary's school, the Basilica and a variety of support and community buildings and housing, and along Molesworth Street various governmental buildings such as the National Library and High Court, along with a variety of commercial buildings.

¹⁶ Repeats: Russell Murray, 'Wellington Cathedral of St Paul', (Wellington City Council: Unpublished report prepared for Plan Change 53, 2007).

The broader setting includes the nearby residential areas of Thorndon and is overlooked by the long ridge of Tinakori Hill, which provides a green backdrop for the Cathedral.

Sources

Coleridge, T.N. 'The Wellington Cathedral of St Paul. A Progressive History'. 1978. 2005-040-201: Wellington Cathedral of St Paul Papers, Alexander Turnbull Library

Historic Places Trust. 'Cecil Wood'. *Professional Biographies*, accessed 10 Jul. 13, <http://www.historic.org.nz/corporate/registersearch/ProfessionalBio/Professional.aspx?CPName=Wood,+Cecil+Walter>

Historic Places Trust. 'King and Dawson'. *Professional Biographies*, accessed 10 July 2013, <http://www.historic.org.nz/corporate/registersearch/ProfessionalBio/Professional.aspx?CPName=King+Cook+and+Dawson>

Hogan, T. 'New Zealand Churches since 1900'. Research Report for Arch 389, Victoria University of Wellington (1987), 117.

Kernohan, David. *Wellington's Old Buildings*. Wellington: Victoria University Press, 1994.

Murray, Russell. *Wellington Cathedral of St Paul, Corner Molesworth Street and Hill Street*. Wellington City Council: Unpublished report, prepared for Plan Change 53, 2005.

'Statement of E.V Dawson, past principal of King and Dawson and past president of the New Zealand Institute of Architects', July 1998. Ms-papers-6707-1, ATL.

'Warren and Mahoney,' Christchurch City Libraries, accessed 10 July 2013, <http://christchurchcitylibraries.com/Art/Architecture/Architects/WarrenAndMahoney/>

Wellington City Council. *Wellington Heritage Building Inventory 2001: Non-Residential Buildings*. Wellington City Council, 2001.

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?*

St Paul's Cathedral is the principal Anglican place of worship in Wellington. It is a large 20th century ecclesiastical building that was built in an amalgam of styles over sixty year period - and these include historicism/Revivalism, Modernism, and Post Modernism. Although the building lacks the cohesion of its original design, it can be seen in the context of the prolonged design and construction process of ancient European Cathedral design - where the various parts of the building are ultimately reflective of the time in which they are built, the assemblage provides an insight into the history of the building.

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?*

St Paul's Cathedral has high townscape value as it is sited on a prominent corner opposite the Parliament buildings, on a main route out of the CBD. It is a large scale building and has landmark status.

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 Cathedral is a part of a group of high profile buildings sited in this area that includes the Parliamentary buildings, the Catholic Basilica and associated complex of Catholic schools, convent, and community buildings on Hill Street, and the Anglican Old St Paul's Cathedral and Bishop's Residence on Mulgrave Street.

Historic Value:

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

This Cathedral is associated with a number of important architects and architectural firms who were involved in its design and construction over 50 years. This includes Cecil Wood, Robert Munro, King and Dawson, and Warren and Mahoney.

It is associated with the Wellington Anglican diocese, and is the culmination of a long history of effort and commitment by the Anglican community; nearly every stage of this buildings history was marred by controversy, from the original designs in the late 1930s to its final completion in 1998. It is now the centre of Anglican worship in Wellington and is regarded (at least in an official sense) as Wellington's most significant Anglican religious building.

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?*

This building is included in the NZAA Central City archaeological area R27/270 and this area is known to be associated with pre 1900 human activity.

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?*

Social Value:

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

This building is held in very high public esteem, in particular by the Anglican community, as it is the centre of Anglican worship in Wellington. It is a local landmark on its prominent corner site for all Wellingtonians.

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 significant spiritual cultural value for the Anglican Church community that use the building.

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 is one of a number of ecclesiastic, civic, diplomatic and commercial buildings that have clustered around the parliament grounds over the past 175 years – these contribute to the sense of identity of Wellington as the nation's capital city.

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

This building has been a place of worship for over 50 years 2011 and has been associated with the key events in the life of members of the congregation including the births, marriages, deaths of individuals, their friends and their family. The church is also the focus of community and social events for the congregation as well as for official/state ceremonies.

Level of cultural heritage significance

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

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

This building is a large scale 20th century ecclesiastic building that was built over a 60 year time period. Although individual elements are good representative examples of the architectural style of their era, the overall assemblage is a unique.

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 authenticity as it retains much of its original fabric and features of each phase of development and each of these have had few modifications.

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 locally important building for the contribution that it makes to the Molesworth Streetscape, its architectural value, its group value in context of the Parliamentary buildings and the Catholic Basilica, its social values, and its authenticity. It plays an important role in the life of Wellington's Anglican community and is a land mark for the wider Wellington community.

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*