

Auckland Council District Plan (North Shore Section)

Proposed Plan Change 38

Proposed New Item

Appendix 11A: Schedule of Buildings, Objects and Places of Heritage Significance



Name: Scouts' Den 1st Devonport Scout Group

Address: Allenby Avenue, Devonport – Alison Park, Devonport

ID: 596 Category: B Use: Community building DP Map:32

Material 1: Condition: Cultural Heritage:

Material 2: Integrity: Streetscape:

Construction Dates c1944 towards the end of WWII

From: To: Alteration Dates:

Legal Description: Lot 19 DP 4405

Zoning: Recreation 4 (Organised Sports) zone

Architect/Designer/Contractor:

Unknown

Architectural Style:

Utilitarian military

Reference Source:

Adam John & Holman Dinah North Shore City Council, Parks Heritage Inventory, Buildings and Structures 2001

Alterations: roof level lifted substantially at some stage to meet building code floor to ceiling requirements, possibly in 1945 when building taken over by Scouts. Previously the decontamination centre would have had minimal headroom indeed,

unless the building was excavated into the site and entailed stepping down to floor level from the entrance.

Associated Proposed Scheduled Items

Girl Guides Den Allenby Avenue

NZHPT Listing:

Not registered by NZHPT

Significant Elements:

The building is located below street level and further hidden from public view by a hedge along the Allenby Ave frontage. It is an elongated rectangular 'bomb proof'¹ brick building with few doors or windows, most of which appear to be later additions after the roof was lifted. The building has a pitched gable roof clad with corrugated iron. To the rear of the building and joined to it is a small gabled building with rusticated weatherboard cladding and a corrugated iron roof, believed to be an ex Army hut²

Extent of Listing:

Entire exterior of building including attached rear timber hut.

History:

Situated on Alison Park on the site of the old Takapuna Racecourse, which existed between 1882 and 1934, the building currently occupied by the Boy Scouts was built as an EPS [Emergency Precautions Service] gas decontamination centre.³

The Takapuna Jockey Club was formed at a meeting at the Masonic Hotel in Devonport on 16 November 1881. The land on which the racecourse was formed, at that time a swamp, was bought in 1882 by Ewen Alison, butcher, of Devonport who was Chairman of the jockey club committee. The land was taken over in the 1890s by the Devonport Steam Ferry Company which was owned by the Alison family. By 1900, there were several buildings on the course: a grandstand with bar, dining room, ladies' room etc; a building housing offices for the secretary, committee, telegraph officials, press representatives, and club officials; and a totalisator building. The course was popular and, on 29 January 1900, 10,000 people attended. The ferry company sold the land on which the Scouts Den now stands to the Takapuna Jockey Club in July 1924. When the Jockey Club eventually wound up the land was gifted, in March 1939, to the Devonport Borough Council for public purposes.⁴

Established in 1908, by a Mr. Simpson, the No 1 Devonport Troop was one of the first Scout groups to be formed in New Zealand. Later in the year Mr. Simpson's son started the No.2 Devonport Troop and, for a while, both groups met in a shed at the rear of the Simpson house in Mozeley Ave. In 1909 the two troops reformed and were known as the Holy Trinity (Devonport) Troop but problems arose when it was stipulated that all members must belong to the Holy Trinity Church. As this precluded other denominations they were forced to disband but immediately reformed as The 3rd Devonport Troop. In 1920, a troop committee consisting of boys and friends of the scouting movement was formed and subsequently built a hut on Rangitoto Island

¹ *The Devonport Flagstaff*, 24/2/2005:p.13 (Ramblings with Rod)

² North Shore City Archives DBC 109/38 7/2/2 Building Inspection Report 11/1/89

³ *North Shore Gazette*, 20/3/1947 (in scrapbook held by the Devonport Historical and Museum Society).

⁴ Adapted from Dinah Holman, Inventory Record Form for North Shore City Parks, June 2001. References cited by Holman: LINZ: CTs 28/47; 57/182 & 231-2; 210/138; TRF 180030 and TRF 306478; North Shore City Archives, DBC 109/38 7/2/2.

to be used as a camp. From 1928 until 1939, the scouts had their headquarters in part of an old military installation on Mt Victoria now known as The Bunker and used by the Devonport Folk Club, and later, during the war, met in the Methodist Sunday School hall in Church Street.⁵

In August 1944, the Chief executive officer of EPS wrote to the Mayor stating that the Devonport Boy Scouts could have the temporary use of the Decontamination Station "...granted conditionally on the pleasure of the Auckland Emergency Precautions Service as the Organisation must reserve the right immediately to put it to such other use at any time as is deemed necessary or desirable".⁶ By January 1945, the EPS was able to advise that their Committee had decided to hand over the building "...as it at present stands, to the Devonport Borough Council for the nominal sum of £50" and, within a matter of weeks the deal was sealed.⁷

The new Den in Allenby Avenue was officially opened in March 1947 when it was handed over to the scouts by the Mayor of Devonport, Mr J.R. Miller. It was explained to the assembled crowd that the building was constructed by the Auckland EPS as a decontamination centre which, after the war, fell into a state of disrepair. After the scouts took possession of it, in 1945, the structure was re-roofed and the interior "...reconditioned and decorated to conform to Scout purposes"⁸

According to records held by the NSC Archives, the decontamination centre was originally roofed with Malthoid. By May 1945, plans had been drawn up and permits requested for "suggested improvements" for the Scouts' Den but the application was deferred for 12 months. The Secretary of the Scout Group, aware of the immediate need to preserve the structure, wrote to the Council asking for permission to carry out the work themselves and was, subsequently, advised that they could re-roof subject to the approval of the Borough Engineer.⁹

The building has almost certainly been re-roofed in more recent times while an "unstable chimney and fireplace" was removed as part of general repairs and maintenance carried out in the 1980s.¹⁰

In January 1989 the Acting Building inspector described the construction of Scout Den thus:

The main building is constructed of single brick with piers at regular intervals of 1.2 metres approximately. The roof is supported on purlins approximately 1m centres which in turn are supported by exposed roof trusses secured to a top plate which bears directly on the brick piers of the outer brick work. Quite normal procedure for that era in time. There seems to be adequate lateral support for the brick work by the internal framed walling that has been fixed in position subsequent to the original design. Two small mezzanine floors have been added which the Scouts use as a hut. The adequacy of this construction is obscure for it has a floor on the top and a ceiling on the bottom.¹¹

Statement of Significance

⁵ Devonport Borough Council Scrapbooks, Vol. 91: 158 (NSTA 19/10/1978); *The Devonport Flagstaff*, 24/2/2005:12-13 (Ramblings with Rod).

⁶ North Shore City Archives, DBC 109/38 7/2/2. Correspondence: 18/8/1944.

⁷ North Shore City Archives, DBC 109/38 7/2/2. Correspondence: 18/1/1945; 2/2/1945.

⁸ *North Shore Gazette*, 20/3/1947 (in scrapbook held by the Devonport Historical and Museum Society).

⁹ North Shore City Archives, DBC 109/38 7/2/2. Correspondence: 26/5/1945; 7/6/1945.

¹⁰ North Shore City Archives, DBC 109/38 7/2/2. Application for new Licence.

¹¹ North Shore City Archives, DBC 109/38 7/2/2. Building Inspection Report 1989.

The Scout building including the rear Army hut has important historic associations with Devonport.

Architecture:

A plain utilitarian structure built towards the end of WWII for the EPS, rear timber structure, a former Army hut.

History:

The Devonport Scouts is significant as one of the first to be established in New Zealand and they met in an assortment of venues until the decontamination centre became available. It also illustrates the reuse of existing buildings for new purposes which was common for many clubs with slender financial resource and only volunteer labour and expertise to rely on.

The club along with many others in Devonport was supported by the Devonport Borough Council in making reserve land available through a Licence to Occupy for such community groups. The Scout building is important in representing themes in the historic development of Devonport including Local Government, Devonport Borough Council, Sporting Organisations, Venues and Community Organisations..

Context:

The Scouts building sits immediately next to the Girl Guides Den which have occupied their premises, the former ladies and gentlemens toilets of the Takapuna Racecourse since 1939. This relationship with a similar organization gives it a certain group value. Alison Park surrounds the Scouts building.