

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



Free standing Melrose Clock
Corner Victoria Road / Albert



Clock on top of verandah of 63 Lake Road



Clock on top of verandah of 89 Vauxhall Road

Name: Devonport's Public Clocks (3-three)

Address:

Melrose Clock Corner of Victoria and Albert Road- (by St Leo's Primary School)

63 Lake Road (on front verandah); and

89 Vauxhall Road (on front verandah)

ID:563, 564,565 Category: All A Use: Public Clocks DP Map: 32,32A

Material 1: Condition: Cultural Heritage:

Material 2: Integrity: Streetscape:

Construction Dates: 1938

From: To: Alteration Dates: 1968? for Vauxhall and Lake Road
clocks.

Legal Description: Not applicable, part of Road Reserves Zoning: N/A

Architect/Designer/Contractor:

Devonport Borough Engineer Mr Griffiths. Some design similarities with the 1928 Alison Memorial Clock designed by architect Roy Lippincott

Architectural Style:

A simple elegant and functional design with little embellishment, apart from some detailing at the top of the support column. Slight art deco influences.

Griffiths produced 5 slightly different designs and type 3 "...suitable for 3 or 4 slave dials, Lantern case on bronze sprayed iron ornamental support¹ "was used for the Melrose clock. Two of the designs incorporated brackets and these may have been used at Vauxhall Road and Lake Road but as the clocks have been relocated this cannot be confirmed. A 1968 newspaper article² has a photograph of the one of the bracketed clocks but too little other information to determine its location.

Reference Source:

See footnotes below.

NZHPT Listing:

Not registered by NZHPT.

Significant Elements:

Melrose clock, a multi faced clock, mounted on a steel column with some decoration to the top of the support column.

Vauxhall Road and Lake Road, multifaced clocks relocated to verandahs.

Extent of Listing:

Entire three (3) clocks- including fittings.

History:

¹ North Shore City Archives, drawings.

² Auckland City Scrap books June 1968 p 204, North Shore Times Advertiser 27.8.68

As part of the golden jubilee of the Devonport Borough, celebrated in November 1936, four special clocks were planned to mark the occasion. The suggestion was first raised at a meeting of the Devonport Borough Council, in August 1936, when Cr. Aldridge proposed that synchronised clocks be placed at strategic points around the borough. These would, he said, be an asset to a community that was so dependent on catching buses and ferries.³ By the end of September specifications had been 'forwarded' and Aldridge had handed over a cheque for £37.6.11d, on behalf of the North Shore Expansion League, as a contribution to the council's trust fund.⁴

A Report of the Works Committee, held on 14 November 1936, recommended that the clocks be situated at the following locations:

- (a) Stanley Bay – three face clock on telegraph pole.
- (b) Victoria Road / Albert Road corner – four face clock at Henderson's Corner [Melrose Clock]. Melrose was the name originally given to this area of Devonport and Henderson's corner after the grocers of this name in the building on the corner of Ewen Alison Avenue.
- (c) Vauxhall Road / Tainui Road corner – two face clock on power pole.
- (d) Lake Road / Old Lake Road corner – three face clock.⁵

These four would be electrically controlled by the master clock in the council chambers.⁶

In October, 1937, the synchronous system of operating the clocks was investigated by an engineer who concluded that such a system could not be made "trouble-proof". His recommendation that it would be better to "...eliminate circuits altogether and accept the tender of Messrs A. Kohn Ltd. for provision of master clocks to work the slave dial in each public clock" was subsequently accepted by the council. The only disadvantage of this system was that the time would not be synchronous.⁷

As of 1938, at least two of the clocks had not been constructed. Specifications and drawings for the columns of the clocks planned for the corners of Victoria Road / Albert Road and Lake Road / Old Lake Road were submitted by the Borough Engineer, Mr. Griffiths. In these he states that the columns are to be of steel, preferably without joints. Where necessary, they are to be horizontal, butt welded and "...ground down so as not to impair the finished surface".⁸ A small access door was to lie flush with the column wall and brackets supporting the clock face were to be constructed out of wrought iron. The drawing depicts a suggested tablet for each clock reading: "This clock was erected by the Devonport Borough Council to commemorate the occasion of the Golden Jubilee of the Borough".⁹ [Currently, there is no evidence of this tablet on the Melrose Clock or any of the other clocks].

³ Devonport Borough Council Scrapbooks 1886-1989, Vol.28, pp.153,180;

⁴ North Shore City Council Archives, DBC 117/18,(Minutes 30/9/1936); Devonport Borough Council Scrapbooks 1886-1989, Vol.28, p167.

⁵ North Shore City Council Archives, DBC 117/18,(Minutes 14/11/1936 p.672).

⁶ Devonport Borough Council Scrapbooks 1886-1989, Vol.28, p179.

⁷ Devonport Borough Council Scrapbooks 1886-1989, Vol.30 p.77

⁸ North Shore City Council Archives, DBC 109/33 6/5/5A, Specifications and drawing by Griffiths. No date other than 1938. Presumably the Mr Griffiths is Arthur Griffiths mentioned in HPT, Reg. 4517 (Watson Memorial).

⁹ Ibid.

Unlike the Alison Memorial Clock (1928) designed by noted architect Roy Lippincott and the Watson Memorial Clock (1936), the four Jubilee clocks did not receive extensive media coverage. However, the clocks were most probably in place by 1938-39.¹⁰

In early 1953 Council accepted the tender of "Automatic Telephone & Electric Company" for time service, guaranteeing accuracy within 30 seconds per month. The Company's tender proposed that they would, under a ten year contract, "...supply and install and fully maintain a completely new [electric clock] installation (except faces, hands and housings which are quite suitable at present) at five points", one of which was the Melrose Clock. Illumination of the clock faces was to remain the responsibility of the Council.¹¹ Over the next ten years, the agreed quarterly rental charge of £47. 17. 6d for the clocks remained constant but, in June 1963, Communication Systems (NZ) Ltd.¹² wrote to the Town Clerk wanting to increase the rental charge by £5 to cover "maintenance costs and overhead expenses".¹³

In 1968 council became concerned about the state of the steel fabricated columns of the Melrose clock and the King's Store clock, both of which were seriously rusting near the base. In addition, the Melrose clock had been used for target practice by someone with a gun resulting in damage to the mechanism. As the cost of repairs was estimated to be around \$400, the council was considering terminating the contracts with Plessey (NZ) Ltd. and possibly removing the clocks altogether.¹⁴

Having been spared destruction, the clocks came under scrutiny again, in 1979, when Plessey (NZ) Ltd sent a report to the Borough Engineer outlining the condition of all five outdoor clocks. Their description of the Melrose clock, at that time, was as follows:

"This clock is a four faced 600mm clock mounted on a steel tower. The clock is driven by a Short Cased master unit, run in on 12 volt cell batteries located in the base of the tower. ...The internal illumination [is] currently provided by the street lighting circuit".¹⁵

Plessey recommended that, with the exception of the Alison Memorial Clock, the pendulum master clocks in the four remaining clocks be replaced with Solid State Plessey Chronogram units for greater accuracy. The problem with the Melrose Clock was that alternative housing would be required for the unit and, at that time, the council was reluctant to spend the anticipated \$2,000.¹⁶

Melrose clock remains in use. North Shore City Council took over responsibility of the public clocks from the Devonport Borough Council in 1989.¹⁷

Statement of Significance

¹⁰ A thorough search of the DBC minutes would clarify this.

¹¹ North Shore City Council Archives, DBC 109/34 6/5/5B, Letter, Town Clerk to Roberts Electrical Ltd (tender not accepted), 27/3/1953 and 23/1/1953 quotation from AT&E Co.

¹² Representing Automatic Telephone & Electric Company, a member of the Plessey Group of Companies.

¹³ North Shore City Council Archives, DBC 109/34 6/5/5B, Letter, Liason Officer to Town Clerk, 11/6/1963.

¹⁴ North Shore City Council Archives, DBC 109/34 6/5/5B, Letter, Town Clerk to Rental Division of Plessey, 4/9/1968; *North Shore Times Advertiser*, 28/8/1968.

¹⁵ North Shore City Council Archives, DBC 109/34 6/5/5B, Letter, Plessey (NZ) Ltd to Borough Engineer, 14/6/1979.

¹⁶ North Shore City Council Archives, DBC 109/34 6/5/5B, Memorandum, Borough Engineer, dated 3/10/1979. No further research has been carried out on the maintenance of Melrose Clock.

¹⁷ NZHPT. Reg.4513 (Alison Clock).

The clocks [Victoria / Albert Road intersection and at 63 Lake Road and 89 Vauxhall Road] are significant and recognizable items of street furniture constructed for the former Devonport Borough Council's jubilee. The clocks are part of a varied but coherent streetscape and are local landmarks.

Architecture:

A simple elegant and functional design with little embellishment, art deco influences.

History:

The Devonport community organizes their lives and trips to town around the ferry and bus timetables and public clocks such as the jubilee clocks and others were a god send to the travelling public who depended on "time and tide"¹⁸. Of the four clocks constructed, the Stanley Bay clock could not be located. Mentioned in correspondence in 1953, it has disappeared from the Borough Council Engineers Report in 1979 as was possibly dismantled at some stage. Three still remain:

- The Melrose Clock, in original location
- Clock to the Vauxhall Road / Tainui Road corner – two face clock on power pole, relocated in 1968? to the verandah roof to 89 Vauxhall Road, now Designworx Interior Design Colour Consultancy, formerly the Vauxhall Road Post Office
- Lake Road / Old Lake Road corner – three face clock, relocated in 1968? to the verandah roof to the former Liquor Store on the Kawerau / Lake Road intersection, at 63 Lake Road.

These clocks are significant for their associations with the jubilee of the former Devonport Borough and together with the two earlier clocks in the borough they date from a period when such clocks on public buildings such as the Ferry Building, post offices and various department stores were common. The clocks represent various themes in the development of Devonport including Infrastructure and Devonport Borough Council.

Context:

The Melrose clock is sited on street berm in a prominent location outside St Leo's School and near the Victoria Road / Albert Road intersection, the clock is surrounded by houses, the Victoria Superette [formerly Hendersons Grocery store] and St Pauls Presbyterian Church and Hall.

The remaining clocks are located in small shopping centres, the Vauxhall Road shops and those at Kings Store [Lake Road / Old Lake Road intersection]. The clocks are part of a varied but coherent streetscape and are local landmarks, particularly the Melrose clock which stands alone.

¹⁸ Devonport Borough Council Scrap Books 1886-1989 Vol 28 p.15