

Heritage Item 14

Plunket Rooms, Ashburton



Location

Address:	111 Victoria Street, Ashburton
Co-ordinates:	Northing 5699665 , Easting 2409797
Legal Description:	Lot 2 DP 9681
Owner:	Ashburton District Council

Purpose

Current Use:	Offices
Original/Past Uses:	Plunket Rooms

Heritage Significance and Category

Heritage Significance:	Physical; Historic
Heritage NZ:	Not registered
Ashburton DC:	Category A

Site Assessment

Assessed by:	Arlene Baird, Davie Lovell-Smith Ltd.
Date Assessed:	9 December 2014

Detail	
Description:	<p>This building was constructed in 1932 and formally opened by Sir Truby King, founder of the Plunket Society. It was later extended in 1998 and the extension opened by then Prime Minister Jenny Shipley.</p> <p>The building is of brick and timber construction, with the top half of the walls rendered and painted. The roof is corrugated iron and is hipped and splayed to the north. The windows are large two-paned top-opening and there are two or three to each elevation affording plenty of light into the building.</p> <p>The building is currently accessed through a small modern porch on the south western elevation. However the main entrance, which is now fenced off and can only be accessed by staff, is on the northern side of the building. This consists of double timber doors with arched lead light glass in the top half, under a Palladian style curved verandah supported by three large columns. This elaborate main entrance contrasts with the relatively plain appearance of the south west and south east elevations of the building.</p> <p>The building is now used as offices.</p>
History:	<p>Plunket Society</p> <p>In the early 1900s Dr. Frederick Truby King found three small babies neglected and dying in a dark lean-to attached to a licensed home for the care of infants in Dunedin. His wife willingly accepted the responsibility of their care and they survived. This prompted the beginnings of one of the finest societies in New Zealand and in 1907 the Plunket Society was formed. Prior to establishment of Plunket, baby lives were being lost in New Zealand at the rate of 75 per 1000 births.</p> <p>King believed that by providing support services to parents, the society could ensure children were fed on a nutritious diet, and therefore reduce infant and child mortality rates. He also believed that this would improve adult health as the children got older. Within a year, the society had opened The Karitane Home For Babies in Dunedin, followed by centres in Auckland, Wellington, and Christchurch. King had the support of influential women in the community, like Mrs Rachelina Armitage of Temuka, Dr. Alice Moorehouse of Christchurch, and his wife, Isabella "Bella" King who was the business and campaign manager, secretary, publicist and link to the society's centres.</p> <p>Originally called the Royal New Zealand Society for the Health of Women and Children, the society later derived its name from an early patron, Victoria A. Plunket mother of eight and wife of then Governor of New Zealand, William Plunket. Lady Plunket addressed meetings frequently discussing the morality rate. She forged a national administration and helped to design the nurses' uniforms. She also patented a hood for baby prams and other conveyances for carrying children.</p> <p>Lady Plunket was actively involved and travelled through New Zealand organising nursing guilds for the instruction of mothers and the salvation of the children, and achieved excellent results. In 1912, Truby King made a lecture tour on the Plunket Society. As a result of his tour, 60 new centres opened around New Zealand, each employing a nurse. The centres were named Plunket Rooms, which changed in 2012 to Plunket Clinics.</p>

Detail	
	<p>The Architect</p> <p>Ernest Mitchell Gabites was a local architect who lived and practised in Ashburton over an extensive period from the early 1920s. Initially a draughtsman and worked briefly in Dunedin after his service in World War II. He was a long term member of the NZIA. He designed a variety of buildings including the Parish Hall for St Stephens Anglican Church 1937 and the Plunket Rooms, 1932 in Ashburton.</p>
Notable Features:	Brick construction; palladian style verandah to the north with large columns; lead light double doors.
Condition:	The building is currently used for offices and appears to be in excellent condition. The brickwork is all tidy and intact as is the roof. All paintwork on the walls, fascias and columns is well maintained and in good condition. The area to the north of the building is fenced off for staff access only.
Setting:	The building is located on the corner of Victoria and Cass Streets, with a low boundary wall and a small area of grass to identify its curtilage. To the north east is a car park which is accessed off Wills Street. The setting of the building is affected by the fact that the main entrance is fenced off for staff access only.





