

St John's Church Trentham Upper Hutt



Lychgate – World War One Memorial

One of Upper Hutt's early War Memorials was the lychgate at the entrance to St John's Church in Trentham. The plaque reads

"This gate was erected to the glory of God and in memory of those members of the Church of England who from Trentham Upper Hutt and surrounding districts laid down their lives in the Great War August 1914 November 1918".

The memorial lynch-gate was blessed on Saturday the 18 April 1925.

Evening Post 17 April 1925

Memorial Gate at Trentham - To-morrow Bishop Spratt will officiate at the dedication of the memorial lych-gate at Trentham, erected by the members of the St John's Anglican Church in memory of those belonging to the Church who fell in the Great War. The gate, which is in keeping with the Church and its surroundings, is of oiled jarrah, the roof being of asbestos tiles. The stones for the wall were taken from the Hutt river-bed, being generously given by the owner of the property from which they were taken, and gathered and carted without cost by vestrymen and other men of the parish. There is also a tablet bearing the names of the fallen inside the north wall of the gateway and this is of grey Australian granite. The wall extends from each side of the gateway, but is not properly part of the memorial, being added as a setting to the lych-gate and as a part of a scheme for the whole frontage of the churchyard on the Main road.

(Reference Papers past website Evening Post newspaper 17 April 1925 page)

The mention in the newspaper article of a tablet bearing the names of the fallen inside the north wall of the gateway is not correct. There is no local knowledge of the existence of this tablet. I believe the journalist who was talking about the plaque list of names made an error and was actually referring to the plaque details above.

Evening Post newspaper 20 April 1925

Disillusioned - Unrealised Blessings - Bishop Spratt on War's Results.

St John's Church, Trentham, was filled on Saturday afternoon on the occasion of the dedication by Bishop Spratt of the lych-gate which has been built as a memorial to the men belonging to the church, who fell in the Great War. A short service on the lines of the usual evening prayer was held in the church, the lessons being read by the Rev. N S Barnett and

the Rev. J H Sykes (both former vicars of the parish), the present vicar, the Rev. G V Kendrick, taking the rest of the service, and Bishop Sprott addressing the congregation. The Bishop said that he thought people in general were not favouring the erection of memorials as much as they had done immediately after the war. It was not that we were forgetting, it was not due to the passage of time, but largely that we had been disillusioned and lost something of that feeling of elation prevalent during the war. We had anticipated wonderful blessings to follow on the Armistice. Perhaps we had expected too much. Had we any right to expect more than a recovery to pre-war status? But, whatever the results of the war, whatever our disillusionments, they should not lessen our admiration for those young men, who, full of life and vitality, full of plans and ambitions for the future, had laid down their lives for us. His Lordship said he thought it was particularly appropriate for the dedication to take place at Easter time - the festival of immortality. To those who had lived their full life, death was not unwelcome, but our soldiers were young, and could not be expected to look at it in that light. He liked to think of the beautiful lines in the Book of Revelations - "His servants shall serve Him, and they shall see His face" - and to think of our brave men as passing to higher service. "Lych," said the speaker, was an Anglo-Saxon word, meaning "corpse," and a lych-gate was a gate leading into a churchyard, under which the coffin or bier could rest. But we could dissociate our thoughts from that grim idea, for in the words of the hymn just sung:

*Jesus lives! henceforth is death
But the gate of life immortal*

At the close of the address the clergy, followed by the congregation, moved to the gate, where prayers were offered by Bishop Sprott, including a particularly beautiful one for our Empire and those who had died to save it. The gate, which, is similar in design to that of St. Mary's, New Plymouth, is of oiled jarrah, with roof of asbestos tiles, and the memorial tablet is of grey Australian granite, bearing the inscription: -

*This gate is erected to the Glory of God and in memory of those members of the
Church of England, who, from Trentham, Upper Hutt, and surrounding districts, laid
down their lives in the Great War. August, 1924 - November, 1918.*

Archdeacons Johnson, and Hansell, and the Revs. Barnett, Sykes, Fry, Compton, Isaacson, and Groves attended, and they, and a large number of those present at the ceremony, were afterwards entertained at tea in the vicarage grounds.

(Reference Papers past website Evening Post newspaper 20 April 1925 page 9)

In those early years Anzac service was held at St John's Church. Across the road from the church was Trentham School. The Trentham School children remembered Anzac day and some details appear in the publication "*The History of Trentham School 1929 – 1979 Upper Hutt*" compiled by the School Committee.

"On the 24th April we gathered armfuls [flowers] to make the wreaths for Anzac Day. On the 25th they were placed on the lych gate at St John's Church." (N.L. Marsh)

"24.4.29 School made 16 wreaths for Anzac Service the following day – Kipling's Recessional and Supreme Sacrifice hymns learnt." (snippets from the school log)

"25.4.31 First Anzac Service held." (snippets from the school log)

"The first Anzac service was held at the school on the 25th April 1931 no fewer than 140 children and 70 adults being present. The Rev G Kendrick Vicar of Upper Hutt conducted the service, while Colonel G Hall C.M.G., C.B.E. V.D. vice-president of the Wellington Returned Soldiers Association delivered an inspiring address.

(Reference Upper Hutt City Library "The History of Trentham School 1929 – 1979 Upper Hutt" compiled by the School Committee z993.65 TRE pages 17, 35, 39 & 41)