

Island Bay Band Rotunda

Shorland Park, Island Bay



Island Bay War Memorial Band Rotunda, from the northeast
(Photo: Charles Collins - 2015)

Summary of heritage significance

- The Island Bay Rotunda is a good representative example of an inter-war municipal band rotunda/war memorial.
- The rotunda is a focal point in Shorland Park, and is still used by the community for ANZAC Day services and for community events.
- The rotunda is now somewhat rare as few of those that were built in the 19th and early 20th century have survived.
- The rotunda has some international significance for its role in commemorating the U.S. Navy Submariners lost in World War II.

District Plan:	Map 4, reference 16
Legal Description:	Lot 475 DP 251
Heritage Area:	No
HPT Listed:	Not registered
Archaeological Site:	Risk unknown – close proximity to Maori sites of significance (M82, M83, M84, M85)
Other Names:	21 Reef Street
Key physical dates:	Built: 1929-1930, extension and refurbishment: 1996
Architect / Builder:	Architect: G.A. Hart, City Engineer Builder: H.S. Anyon
Former uses:	War Memorial and Band Rotunda
Current uses:	War Memorial and stage for community events
Earthquake Prone Status:	January 2013: Yet to be assessed (SR 269240)

Extent: Cityview GIS 2013



The Island Bay War Memorial Band Rotunda in the main section of Shorland Park, bordered by The Parade, Reef Street, and The Esplanade (Image from Google Maps, September 2011).

1.0 Outline History

1.1 History¹

The first record of a proposal to build a band rotunda at Island Bay was in 1914, when a deputation from the Island Bay Elector's Association asked the Wellington City Council that one be built.² There is no indication where the rotunda was intended to go. In 1918 the council acquired what was known as the Rest Park and the association pressed the Reserves Committee to fund a memorial as part of the enhancement of the park.³ Among the association's number was Charles Odlin of C. & A. Odlin Ltd, the timber merchants. However, it would be another 10 years before the rotunda was built.⁴

On 16 September 1921 the *Evening Post* reported that residents of Island Bay had met to discuss "the erection of a war memorial in honour of the men from Island Bay who served in the late war."⁵ The Mayor (Mr. R. A. Wright, M.P.) attended the meeting and commented that the memorial would "harmonise with the City Council's scheme for the improvement of the foreshore, which was to make Island Bay a picturesque part of Wellington."⁶ At this meeting the form of the memorial was not agreed upon, some being in favour of a memorial band rotunda, others favouring a monument, and others the erection of memorial gates to the foreshore park. The Island Bay Soldiers' and Sailors' Memorial Committee was set up discuss the matter and report at a later date. The Chairman of the committee was Charles Camperdown Odlin, one half of the successful C. & A. Odlin Timber and Hardware Co. Ltd, who built a lot of notable building in Island Bay. The other members of the committee were: Mr. J.O. Shorland (Deputy Chairman), Mr. J. Pragnell (Secretary), Mr. H.H. Miller and Mr. E. Wiggins (Treasurers).

In 1923 it was decided at a public meeting that a band rotunda was the most suitable form for the memorial to take.⁷ In 1927 Odlin wrote to the Town Clerk requesting the City Engineer prepare a design for the rotunda.⁸ The committee had gathered £400 towards the cost of such a structure and sought a subsidy from the council to fund the work.⁹ The council's Reserve Committee agreed to consider a pound-for-pound subsidy, and in the end the parks and Reserves Department and the Tramway Department each contributed £200.

¹ Unless otherwise referenced, this history is taken from the following document: Charters, Melanie. *Island Bay War Memorial Band Rotunda, Shorland Park: Conservation Plan*. Unpublished report prepared for the Wellington City Council, 2011.

² Town Council Minute Book Vol.25 p.225 28/5/1914, Wellington City Archives

³ File 18/589 .Island Bay Electors Association. 9/5/1918, Wellington City Archives

⁴ This paragraph is taken from Wellington City Council, "Reef Street, Island Bay: Band Rotunda," *Wellington Heritage Building Inventory 2001: Non-Residential Buildings*. (Wellington City Council, 2001), REEF 1.

⁵ "War Memorial," *Evening Post*, September 16, 1921, 4

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ "Island Bay War memorial," *Evening Post*, November 13, 1923, 8

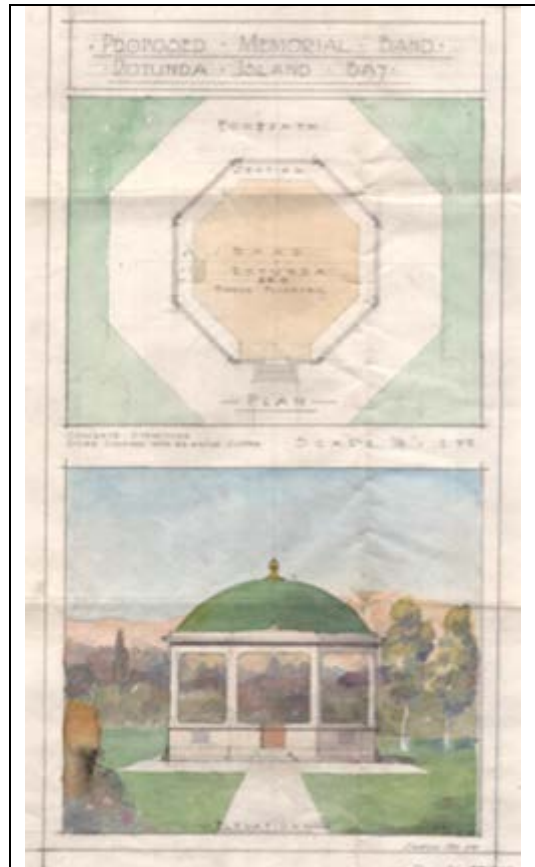
⁸ Island Bay Soldiers' and Sailors' Memorial Committee to Town Clerk, "Island Bay Soldiers' and Sailors' Memorial," October 6, 1927, 0000:2000:60/176, Wellington City Archives

⁹ Ibid.

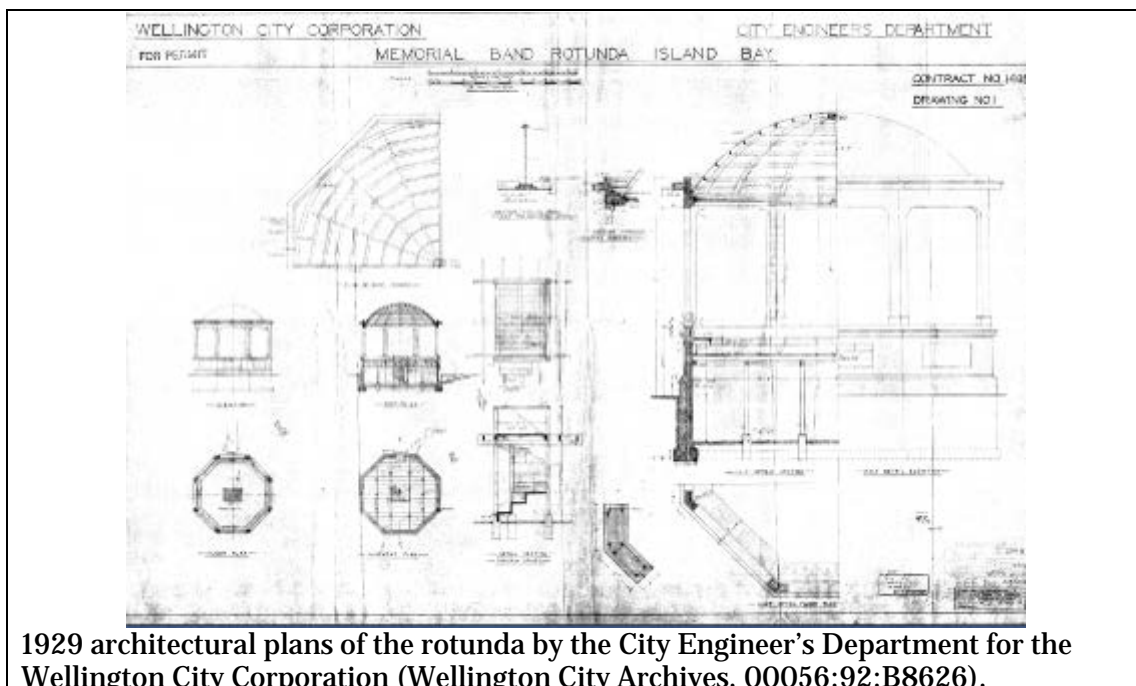
Work was stalled and it was not until April 1929 that plans were drawn up.¹⁰ In May a sub-committee of the Island Bay Soldiers' and Sailors' Memorial Committee met and approved the sketch plan of the proposed memorial band rotunda. The *Evening Post* reported that "the rotunda is to be placed as nearly as possible in the centre of the Island Bay play area, so that, when the bands do use it, the music will be heard from all sides."¹¹

In order to gather the names for the marble tablets, the Committee placed several advertisements in the *Evening Post* and the *Dominion*. Advertisements appealed for "the names of all soldiers and sailors who served in the war and were residents of the district at the date of their enlistment."¹²

Architectural plans were drawn up by the City Engineer's Department. They are very similar to the watercolour sketch, the main difference being the omission of the decorative finial on the crown of the dome. The floor plan includes a trap door and stairs down to the basement.



Detail of the 1929 watercolour sketch (WC Archives, 00001:2000:60/176).



1929 architectural plans of the rotunda by the City Engineer's Department for the Wellington City Corporation (Wellington City Archives, 00056:92:B8626).

¹⁰ City Engineer, "Proposed Memorial Band Rotunda Island Bay: Sketch", April 24, 1929, Wellington City Archives, 00001:2000:60/176.

¹¹ "Island Bay Memorial Rotunda," *Evening Post*, May 24, 1929, 15.

¹² "Island Bay War Memorial," *Evening Post*, October 4, 1929, 5.

Tenders closed on October 21, 1929. Construction started in November and was expected to be completed by December as an opening date had been fixed,¹³ however this deadline was missed.



The rotunda during construction, c1929-1930 (*Evening Post* Collection, Alexander Turnbull Library¹⁴).



View of Island Bay, looking towards Reef Street. The Blue Platter Tea House can be seen near the foreshore. The bandstand is undergoing construction in what was to become Shorland Park in 1930 (*Evening Post* Collection, Alexander Turnbull Library, 1/2-087978-G).

¹³ Town Clerk to Mr H.S. Anyon, October 22, 1929, 00001:1506:37/198, Wellington City Archives.

¹⁴ Image taken from Gordon Spittle, "A day at the rotunda," in *Writing Island Bay*, ed. Alan Brunton (Wellington, NZ: Bumper Books for Island Bay Residents Association, 1997).

The rotunda was handed over to the city on 20 February 1930 and was officially opened by the Mayor, Mr. G.A. Troup, on 16 March 1930, in front of “a large gathering of residents and their children”.¹⁵ The Mayor gave a speech in which he urged the community to remember those men whom the memorial perpetuated:

The emblem itself is a dead thing, the memory and love which it engenders (sic) are living things... As we hear the strains of sweet music coming from under this canopy may it always be as the sound of many voices – the voices of those who strove to keep our heritage safe and free, and hearing those voices may we one and all be nerved to follow whenever and wherever the call of duty may come to them.¹⁶

A short religious ceremony in memory of those who died in the Great War was conducted by Salvation Army reverends, and the Municipal Tramways Band played hymns during the service. A recital by the band followed, and then the Island Bay School Drum and Fife Band played.¹⁷

In 1934 the Island Bay Soldiers' and Sailors' Memorial Committee ascertained that a number of names had been missed,¹⁸ and another marble tablet, with 17 additional names, was added to the rotunda.¹⁹ By this time concerts were seldom held in the rotunda.²⁰ This was due to the fact that the Council subsidy was withdrawn, so there was no longer any incentive for the Bands Association to play.

In 1959, at the request of the Island Bay Branch of The Wellington Returned Services' Association, an additional plaque was added to the rotunda to commemorate those from the district who “made the supreme sacrifice during World War II”.²¹

¹⁵ “War memorial,” *Evening Post*, March 17, 1930, 11.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ “Island Bay Memorial,” *Evening Post*, July 21, 1934, 7.

¹⁹ Island Bay Soldiers' and Sailors' Memorial Committee to Town Clerk, October 26, 1934, 0000:2000:60/176, Wellington City Archives

²⁰ Island Bay Municipal Electors' Association to Town Clerk, December 31, 1933, 0000:2000:60/176, Wellington City Archives

²¹ Town Clerk to Island Bay Branch of the Wellington Returned Services' Association, August 14, 1959, 0000:2000:60/176, Wellington City Archives

In 1978, Mr T.E. Kaiser of the U.S. Submarine Veterans of World War II donated a bronze plaque to the City of Wellington in memory of the U.S. Navy submariners lost in World War II.²² The Council accepted the plaque and the Director of Parks recommended it be erected at the Island Bay memorial rotunda. This location was felt appropriate, given its proximity to the sea, with the view out over Cook Strait and the South Pacific.²³ The Wellington Returned Services Association agreed and the plaque was shipped to New Zealand where it was unveiled on 4 July 1979, presided over by Michael Fowler, the Mayor of the day.



The 1979 unveiling of the plaque dedicated to the US Navy Submariners who fell in World War II (WC Archives, 0001:2288:60/4669)

In 1996, as part of a general upgrade to facilities in Shorland Park, the band rotunda was extended and refurbished.²⁴ The work included a stage extension, and the completion of deferred maintenance. The existing concrete steps and selected concrete infill walls of the existing rotunda were demolished and three sections of concrete balustrade were cut away. New reinforced concrete steps and a stage, which extended from the existing structure on three sides, were constructed, and the grassed area adjacent to the new stage was backfilled and landscaped. New galvanized steel balusters were installed around five of the perimeter walls (to give a height of one metre above the concrete floor).

The rotunda continues to be the focal point for Anzac Day commemorations, and is used as a music and entertainment venue during the Island Bay Festival, an annual nine-day community festival held in February since 1985.²⁵ The rotunda is a focus of the festival, and even featured on the 2011 advertisement as “the centre of the universe”.

²² Mr. Thomas E. Keiser to The Editor, *Evening Post*, 1978, 00001:2288:60/4669, Wellington City Archives.

²³ Town Clerk to Mr. Thomas E. Keiser, “US Submarine Veterans World War II – Donation of Plaque”, May 11, 1978, 0001:2288:60/4669, Wellington City Archives.

²⁴ ‘Drawings: Extensions and Alterations to rotunda Shorland Park’, July 3, 1996, 00078:572:22199, Wellington City Archives.

²⁵ Harry Midgely, “Island Bay Festival – Who is / History”, Copyright 2011, <http://festival.islandbay.net.nz/who-is/>



The rotunda in use during the Island Bay Festival, 2008 (Photo: Sarah Hunter, Tranzmit).

1.2 Timeline of events, including modifications²⁶

- 1921 The residents of Island Bay decided to erect a war memorial in honour of the men from the district who served in World War I. At this time the Island Bay Soldiers' and Sailors' Memorial Committee was established.
- 1923 The Committee decided that the memorial would take the form of a band rotunda.
- 1929 Plans were drawn up and construction began in November.
- 1930 The rotunda was completed in February and officially opened on 16 March.
- 1934 Timber flooring was repaired and painted. To aide ventilation seven cast iron ventilators were inserted into the plinth.
- 1935 A 4th marble plaque with 17 additional names was added in January.
- 1946 Further repairs were made to the floor after a leak was identified.
- 1954 Temporary lights were installed as decoration for the Royal Visit.
- 1955 Permanent lighting and a weatherproof electrical socket were installed.
- 1959 An additional marble tablet commemorating those from the district who served in World War II was installed.
- 1975 A Council Engineer inspected the rotunda and noted that the floor had recently been replaced with concrete.
- 1979 A bronze plaque honouring the U.S. Navy Submarines who served in World War II was erected.
- 1987 A Council report identified the rotunda as needing \$250 worth of unspecified minor repairs.
- 1994 The rotunda was listed in the Notified District Plan.
- 1996 As part of upgrade work to facilities in Shorland Park, the rotunda was refurbished and an extension was added, at a cost of \$59,483.00.
- 2005 A new power supply and switchboard were installed.
- 2011 The U.S. Navy submarines plaque was cleaned by an unknown party.

²⁶ Charters, Melanie. *Island Bay War Memorial Band Rotunda, Shorland Park: Conservation Plan*.

1.3 Architect²⁷

The City Engineer's Department for the Wellington City Corporation

At this time the City Engineer was G.A. Hart. Hart was a very experienced engineer²⁸ who arrived from England in November 1926 to take up the post in Wellington.²⁹

Hart served as the Wellington City Engineer for nine years. During this time he was also involved in the restoration of Napier's drainage and water works systems following the devastating earthquake in 1931.³⁰ Upon retiring in 1935 Hart was involved in an inquiry into the development of the Auckland metropolitan district drainage system.³¹

2.0 Physical description

2.1 Architecture

This small band rotunda is octagonal in plan, with eight small piers supporting a plain cornice and domed roof. Decoration is minimal. Plaques set into the sides of the structure commemorate those from Island Bay, Houghton Bay, and Happy Valley that were killed in action during World War One and World War Two. A plaque also commemorates United States submarine sailors lost in World War Two.³²

2.2 Materials

The construction is reinforced-concrete foundations and walls, cornices and roof. Timber was specified as totara or jarrah for framing, with matai tongue and groove flooring, and Oregon for rafters. The memorial slabs were specified as "best New Zealand grey marble" with lead-filled lettering.³³

2.3 Setting³⁴

The Island Bay War Memorial Band Rotunda is located in Shorland Park, an urban community park situated at the southern end of Island Bay.

The park has changed substantially in the years since the rotunda was built. Today the park is made up of two triangular sections. The main section is a large grassed area containing the rotunda, children's play equipment, electric barbeques and public toilets. Three busy roads border this section: The Parade, Reef Street and The Esplanade. The second section, which is separated from the main park by Reef Street, is a much smaller grassed area, and is used as a dog exercise area. The park looks across The Esplanade to the Island Bay foreshore and the historic Island Bay Surf Club, and out to Tapu Te Ranga Island beyond.

²⁷ Charters, Melanie. *Island Bay War Memorial Band Rotunda, Shorland Park: Conservation Plan*, p24

²⁸ "The City Engineer," *Evening Post*, June 16, 1926, 8.

²⁹ "New City Engineer," *Evening Post*, November 9, 1926, 10.

³⁰ "A Big Problem," *Evening Post*, March 23, 1931, 10.

³¹ "The City Engineer," *Evening Post*, October 18, 1935, 8.

³² Wellington City Council, "Reef Street, Island Bay: Band Rotunda," *Wellington Heritage Building Inventory 2001: Non-Residential Buildings*. (Wellington City Council, 2001), REEF 1.

³³ Wellington City Council, "Reef Street, Island Bay: Band Rotunda," *Wellington Heritage Building Inventory 2001: Non-Residential Buildings*. (Wellington City Council, 2001), REEF 1.

³⁴ Charters, Melanie. *Island Bay War Memorial Band Rotunda, Shorland Park: Conservation Plan*, p26

The beach at Island Bay remains a popular recreation spot and both locals and visitors to the area use the park regularly. The park provides a space for community events such as the Island Bay Festival, an annual nine-day community festival held in February since 1985.³⁵ The park also serves as the start/finish of two major walkways; the City to Sea Walkway, and the Southern Walkway. It is near several sites of significance to Tangata Whenua or other Maori including M82, M83, M84, M85 and M90.

The rotunda is a focal point of Shorland Park, and along with the Surf Club, Bait Shed, Sea Wall and Terminus area, is a prominent feature in the heritage landscape of Island Bay.

3.0 Sources

Charters, Melanie. *Island Bay War Memorial Band Rotunda, Shorland Park: Conservation Plan*. Unpublished report prepared for the Wellington City Council, 2011.

Midgely, Harry. "Island Bay Festival – Who is / History", Copyright 2011, <http://festival.islandbay.net.nz/who-is/>

Spittle, Gordon. "A day at the rotunda," in *Writing Island Bay*, ed. Alan Brunton (Wellington, NZ: Bumper Books for Island Bay Residents Association, 1997).

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Archives

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File 18/589 .Island Bay Electors Association. 9/5/1918, Wellington City Archives

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City Engineer, "Proposed Memorial Band Rotunda Island Bay: Sketch", April 24, 1929, Wellington City Archives, 00001:2000:60/176.

Town Clerk to Mr H.S. Anyon, October 22, 1929, 00001:1506:37/198, Wellington City Archives.

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Town Clerk to Island bay Branch of the Wellington Returned Services' Association, August 14, 1959, 0000:2000:60/176, Wellington City Archives

³⁵ Midgely, "Island Bay Festival – Who is / History."

Mr. Thomas E. Keiser to The Editor, *Evening Post*, 1978, 00001:2288:60/4669, Wellington City Archives.

Town Clerk to Mr. Thomas E. Keiser, "US Submarine Veterans World War II – Donation of Plaque", May 11, 1978, 0001:2288:60/4669, Wellington City Archives.

'Drawings: Extensions and Alterations to rotunda Shorland Park", July 3, 1996, 00078:572:22199, Wellington City Archives.

Newspapers

"War Memorial," *Evening Post*, September 16, 1921, 4

"Island Bay War memorial," *Evening Post*, November 13, 1923, 8

"Island Bay Memorial Rotunda," *Evening Post*, May 24, 1929, 15.

"Island Bay War Memorial," *Evening Post*, October 4, 1929, 5.

"War memorial," *Evening Post*, March 17, 1930, 11.

"Island Bay Memorial," *Evening Post*, July 21, 1934, 7.

"The City Engineer," *Evening Post*, June 16, 1926, 8.

"New City Engineer," *Evening Post*, November 9, 1926, 10.

"A Big Problem," *Evening Post*, March 23, 1931, 10.

"The City Engineer," *Evening Post*, October 18, 1935, 8.

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?*

The Island Bay Rotunda is a good representative example of an inter-war municipal band rotunda/war memorial.

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?*

The rotunda is a modest concrete structure, of a simple but pleasing design, which is a functional and symbolic landmark in Island Bay.

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?*

Historic Value:

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

Association: *Is the item associated with an important historic event, theme, pattern, phase, or activity?*

This rotunda has been a significant local amenity and an important war memorial since its construction in 1929-30. It was built to commemorate the local men who served in World War I and later came to commemorate the involvement of those who also lost their lives in World War II. The memorial also honours the sacrifice of U.S. Navy Submariners lost in World War II.

The memorial also has close associations with the recreational history of Island Bay and with Wellington's music history, as concerts were (and still are) performed there.

Scientific Value:

Archaeological: *Does the item have archaeological value for its ability to provide scientific information about past human activity?*

Risk unknown. The rotunda is near several sites of significance to Maori including M82, M83, M84, M85 and M90.

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?*

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 band rotunda is an iconic heritage feature of Island Bay and has strong associations with the local community, particularly war veterans and their descendants.

A ceremony is held at the rotunda every Anzac Day, continuing the rotundas commemorative function as a war memorial.

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 rotunda has had few intrusive modern alterations or additions (with the notable exception of the 1996 stage alterations) over the past 80+ years and contributes to the sense of place and continuity of Island Bay.

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

The rotunda is a focal point in Shorland Park, and is still used by the community as an entertainment and music venue during events and festivals. It is likely to be held in high public esteem and be the focus of community sentiment and connection.

Level of cultural heritage significance

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

The rotunda is now somewhat rare as few of those that were built in the 19th and early 20th century have survived.

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

The building is a good example of a simple band rotunda, of which there were once many throughout the country.

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?*

Despite modifications, a significant amount of original fabric remains intact.

Local/Regional/National/International

Is the item important for any of the above characteristics at a local, regional, national, or international level?

The rotunda is of local importance to the Island Bay community.

The rotunda has some international significance for its role in commemorating the U.S. Navy Submariners lost in World War II.

4.0 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*