

Ballarat St Bridge Ballarat Street, QUEENSTOWN

<http://www.historic.org.nz/Register/ListingDetail.asp?RID=7097&sm=>

Register Number:7097 Registration Type:
Historic Place - Category I Region:Otago Region
Date Registered:17/12/93 City/District Council:
Queenstown-Lakes District Council

Brief History: This stone arch bridge was constructed in 1882. It provides access across Horne Creek, (once known as Town Creek) which wends its way through the northern edge of Queenstown's commercial centre. It was erected

by local stonemason James McNeil, whose work also survives in the former Lake County offices and his own cottage in Church Street, now open as a bar and small brewery. McNeil had immigrated from Scotland in his teens and worked as a stonemason in Oamaru and Alexandra before moving to Queenstown in 1882.



The bridge consists of a single arch, constructed from the local schist, topped with a stone parapet. The bridges which were first constructed in Queenstown in the early 1860s tended to be of wood and generally needed to be replaced after 20-odd years. Controversy surrounded the building of the Ballarat Street Bridge; the council argued over which should be built first, it or the bridge in Shotover Street. The design was also contentious; the local paper questioned whether the low arch would be strong enough for the traffic. During construction the building inspector complained about the size of stone being used (his report was eventually over-ridden), about the length of time it was taking to construct the bridge, and about the steep approaches to it. While the council agreed with the inspector's last comment, they decided that the contractor had complied with the plans provided to him and therefore the council should spend an extra £20 on building up the road. The bridge was mostly complete by 6 June 1882, with only the pointing and coping to do. It was not entirely finished because of the 'loss of the stonemason' who appeared to have disappeared. The whole was finally complete on 7 July 1882.

Stone arch bridges are relatively unusual in New Zealand and the Ballarat Street Bridge is unusual within that small group because it is constructed from coursed rubble schist rather than from the more common ashlar blocks of limestone. Schist was a common building material in Central Otago due to its availability and the relative lack of timber in the area. The Ballarat Street Bridge is a picturesque element of the Queenstown streetscape and a reminder of Queenstown's early days. Current Use:

Transport - Bridge/ Viaduct

Former Uses: Transport - Bridge/ Viaduct

Construction Dates: Original Construction: 1882 - 1882

Construction Professionals: [McNeil, James - Builder](#)

Entry Written By:Melanie Lovell-Smith Entry Completed:3/7/02 Information

Sources: Marion Borrell, 'Old Buildings of the Lakes District', Dunedin, 1973

E.C. Mills, 'The Ballarat Street Bridge', Queenstown Courier, 56, pp.15-17

Associated Listings: [Ballarat Street Historic Area](#)



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Queenstown Library and Reading Room (Former) Corner, 44 Stanley Street and Ballarat Street, QUEENSTOWN

<http://www.historic.org.nz/Register/ListingDetail.asp?RID=362&sm=>

Register Number:362 Registration Type: Historic Place - Category I

Region:Otago Region Date Registered:26/11/81 City/District Council:

Queenstown-Lakes District Council

Brief History: The stone courthouse and library that stand at the entrance to the commercial centre of Queenstown, sheltered under large Wellingtonian pines, are a distinctive and much valued landmark of Queenstown. Both buildings were designed by Invercargill architect F.W. Burwell (1846-1915). It seems likely that Burwell designed the two buildings to be built simultaneously. However, the courthouse was built first, begun in 1875 and finished in 1876, followed by the library, completed in 1877. The two buildings run at right angles to each other and share a wall, presumably to save costs. Both were built from the local schist, with corrugated iron roofs, but have different histories of use over the years.

The first representatives of law and order in the Queenstown area were the wardens of the goldfields, appointed for their knowledge of the Mining Act. By April of 1863 the two wardens appointed to Arrowtown and Queenstown were asking that public offices and quarters be erected for their use. At that time they were working out of two tents which functioned as the gold receiver's office, sleeping quarters and courthouse. These tents were becoming dilapidated and because of the severe winters, both wardens strongly suggested a tender for the construction of the buildings be accepted 'at once'. Fortunately tenders were called for a wooden courthouse in July 1863. By 1874 it was decided to replace this with a substantial stone courthouse and athenaeum, and tenders were called for its construction in June 1875. The courthouse building was erected between November 1875 and September 1876. It varies from the standard nineteenth century pattern of such buildings in New Zealand and Australia, with its courtroom situated at the southern end of the building and the offices between it and the library to the north, rather than having the courtroom in the centre, surrounded by offices on two or three sides.

The courthouse continues to serve as the local seat of justice. While the offices have been rearranged over the years, the basic layout of the courthouse remains unchanged.

Calls for a library and athenaeum for Queenstown had begun as early as 1873. It appears that building of the library began later than the courthouse. It was underway by the middle of 1876 and was finished by early 1877. The library formally opened with a concert on 17 March 1877 and was described at the Library Committee's Annual General Meeting in July as a 'handsome and commodious building'. At the time of opening it had two main rooms and a small central store room. These two rooms alternated functions over the years, used as either the reading room or the lending library. The building was threatened with demolition in the 1960s when the Borough Council wished to build a new library combined with new council offices. However, there was a vehement public outcry, both locally and nationally and eventually, after holding a referendum in 1967, which showed the majority of ratepayers wished to retain the old building, the council changed its mind and constructed a new library adjacent to the old. Water was laid on to the old building for the first time in its history, a storeroom was created and access to the new library provided by a doorway cut in the end wall. The old library building is currently occupied by the Citizens' Advice Bureau.

The Courthouse and Library are two of the few structures that survive from Queenstown's early goldmining days. They are fine examples of stone construction using the local schist. Together they create a distinctive entrance into the central business district of Queenstown and are much loved by the locals, as was evidenced in the struggle to save the library building in the 1960s and more recent concerns over a planned development next to the courthouse. Current Use: Civic facilities and recreation - Information/Visitors Centre

Law Enforcement - Courthouse

Former Uses: Civic facilities and recreation - Library

Law Enforcement - Courthouse

Notable Features: Two giant redwoods, (*Sequoiadendron Giganteum*) also known as Wellingtonia were planted outside the courthouse and library around 1876, by Phillip Boulton, clerk to the Lake County Council. Boulton had read of the American tradition of planting 'trees of justice' outside courthouses to provide shade for those attending court and thought it was a tradition worth emulating. Construction Dates: Original Construction: 1875 - 1877

Addition - New library building erected next to old library building.: 1970

Construction Professionals: [Burwell, F W - Architect](#)

Entry Written By: Melanie Lovell-Smith Entry Completed: 3/6/03 Information

Sources: P Adams, 'Queenstown Library: Research Report for the New Zealand Historic Places Trust', HP 26/1970, 29 April 1970, on file 12007-018

The Hillier Manual of Trees & Shrubs, 6th edn, Newton Abbot, Devon, 1991

F.W.G. Miller, Golden Days of Lake County, 5th edn, Christchurch, 1973

Southland Daily News, 10 February 1967

Associated Listings: [Ballarat Street Historic Area](#)

[Courthouse](#)