

John Ballance Plinth



Location: Moutoa Gardens, **Heritage NZ Pouhere Taonga**
Whanganui **List Number:** 967

Physical Description: The memorial now comprises a rusticated stone base with a chamfered plinth to a now removed statue of Prime Minister John Ballance.

Other known names: John Ballance Memorial, Ballance Statue

Current Use: Memorial, Plinth only

Former Uses: Plinth of Ballance statue

Heritage Status: Heritage NZPT List **District Plan Class:** Class A
(Cat. 2)

Architectural Style: Classical **Date of Construction:** 1898 memorial

Materials: Granite, concrete base

Registered owner:

Legal Description: Pt Res I Town of Wanganui (CT WN21/110), Wellington Land District

Register Item Number:

371

Building Type:

- Residential
- Commercial
- Industrial
- Recreation
- Institutional
- Agriculture
- Other

Significance:

- Archaeological
- Architectural
- Historic
- Scientific
- Technological
- Cultural

Thematic Context

- Early Settlement
- Residential
- Industry
- Agricultural
- Commerce
- Transport
- Civic/Admin
- Health
- Education
- Religion
- Recreation
- Community
- Memorials
- Military

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History: Irish-born John Ballance and his wife Fanny emigrated to New Zealand in 1866, and arrived in Wanganui in mid-August of that year. In 1867, Ballance established the *Evening Herald*, that subsequently became the *Wanganui Herald* – and he developed a role as something of a “maverick troublemaker”. Fanny Ballance died in 1868 and he then married Ellen Anderson in 1870. There were no children to either marriage, however, he and Ellen adopted Ellen’s four-year-old niece Florence, and renamed her Kathleen.

In 1875, Ballance narrowly won the Rangitikei seat on a platform stressing the abolition of the provincial system and arguing in favour of state education. His career developed to the point where he became New Zealand’s 11th Prime Minister in 1891, as leader of the Liberal Party – New Zealand’s first political party. His term in office brought in the Old Age Pension. He is also noted for his support for women’s suffrage and a radical land policy – the latter coming back to the forefront 101 years after his death. John Ballance died from cancer in Wellington on 27 April 1893, while still in office, and was buried in a State funeral at Wanganui three days later.¹

On 3rd May 1893, the Mayor, Freeman R. Jackson, invited members of the public to a meeting at the Council Chambers. He said that he had been requested to call the meeting so that those present could consider what Wanganui’s memorial to Ballance should be. Even by that time, it was known that a memorial was being planned in Wellington. One speaker, Mr A.D. Willis, commented that in a conversation with Ballance, he (Ballance) had said that “*he wanted no other monument than that the deeds which he had done should live in the minds of the people, and he (Willis) thought the sentiment was characteristic of the man.*” Suggestions for the memorial focussed on a scholarship for school pupils of the district.²

Plans in Wanganui progressed slowly, however, the efforts of the Ballance Memorial Committee in Wellington moved relatively fast. By March 1894, the design chosen was that of R.R. MacGregor, a Wellington architect, and this was for a monument 27 feet high, to be made of bluestone and marble.³ Where exactly to place the Wellington statue was another issue, with a site in the new

¹ Tim McIvor, ‘Ballance, John, 1839-1893’, *The Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, Vol. Two, 1870-1900 (Wellington, 1993), pp. 23-25

² *Wanganui Chronicle*, 4 May 1893, p. 2

³ *Wanganui Chronicle*, 12 March 1894, p. 2

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Parliamentary grounds being preferred.⁴

By 29 June 1894, Wanganui's Ballance Memorial Fund had raised over £240 toward the town's monument. Wanganui's proposals for a memorial included a marble bust to be placed at the library or museum (this was Mrs Ballance's preference) and the aforementioned scholarship.⁵

As well as the public memorials, Mrs Ballance's own monument was coming from England. It consisted of five tons of Irish gray granite and was to be erected over her husband's grave.⁶

The 'somewhat shorter than originally planned' Wellington statue was unveiled on 7th April 1897 by the Premier, Richard Seddon. However, despite a clay model and efforts to ensure it looked like Ballance, the Wellington statue did not turn out as well as hoped for.⁷

A letter written to the *Wanganui Chronicle*, on 29 April 1897 (p. 3) remarked that the statue resembled anybody but Ballance, and "*the scrimpy stone-work on which it stands has a shoddy appearance which suggests littleness, instead of greatness*⁸...*It is understood that we are to have a facsimile of the above for Wanganui...To erect a statue here – where he was so well known – which is very inartistically mounted...seems very much like wasting the subscriber's money.*"⁹

The Wellington statue (and evidently the Wanganui statue - no evidence to the contrary being found during this study) was to the design of Wellington architect R. Roy MacGregor, one of 28 received from around the country. It was selected by the architects Frederick de Jersey Clere and T. Turnbull. The statue was first modelled in clay by Mr J. Davie¹⁰ at Mr W.J. Helyer's works in Melbourne. It was

⁴ *Wanganui Chronicle*, 18 April 1894, p. 2

⁵ *Wanganui Chronicle*, 30 June 1894, p. 2

⁶ *Wanganui Chronicle*, 6 November 1894, p. 2, 27 February 1895, p. 2

⁷ *Wanganui Chronicle*, 1 November 1895, p. 2

⁸ These three blocks of granite (used for the steps and pillar) had in fact been donated for the purpose by the miners of Cape Foulwind: *Evening Post*, 7 April 1897, p. 5

⁹ *Wanganui Chronicle*, 29 April 1897, p. 3

¹⁰ John Swan Davie, a Melbourne sculptor, also designed the statue of Queen Victoria at Market Square, Geelong: "*The Statue of Queen Victoria, one of a large number which burgeoned through the Colony after her death in 1901 is a fine example of figurative sculpture on a classical stone base. The casting in London of the sculpted effigy by J. Davie, a Melbourne Sculptor, reflects the nature of the foundry man's craft. The*

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then cast in plaster and the result was reviewed and approved by Messrs. Seddon, Ward and Carroll, as well as being inspected by the Memorial Committee and several relations and friends of Ballance's. Helyer's contract was for £535.¹¹

In August 1897, the Ballance Memorial Committee approached the Domain Board requesting permission to erect the proposed memorial to John Ballance at Queen's Park. *"The spot chosen was near the Soldiers' Monument, and is at the intersection of four roads running through the Reserve. The memorial will take the form of a marble statue on a granite pedestal, enclosed in a neat iron railing, set in concrete. The statue and pedestal are now ready, and work will be commenced as soon as your consent is gained."* The committee then agreed to the proposal.¹²

The intention was that former Premier, Sir Robert Stout (1884-1887), would unveil the monument on 5th January 1898, however, he came down with influenza in an epidemic then doing the rounds, and the unveiling was postponed until the 8th. However, even that date was postponed.¹³

Sir Robert Stout finally unveiled the monument on 3rd February 1898, in front of a large assemblage of people – including Mrs Ballance (who had not attended the Wellington unveiling). Stout said in his very lengthy speech (at the end of which he announced his resignation from politics) that Ballance had been a friend and he had known him for twenty years – initially through correspondence. They had first met in 1875 when both entered the House of Representative, and got on well despite being on opposite sides of the House. He then spoke at length of their shared and opposed views, and their various paths through Ballance's latter years and Ballance's last weeks of life. Ballance had extracted a promise from Stout that if he did not survive the operation (which in fact occurred), that Stout would *"come forward as a candidate for the House and help the Liberal Party, for which he (Ballance) had done so much."* In the event, another leader had been chosen by the party, but Stout was keen to

statue (has) historical significance as Geelong's mark of affection to their long serving Queen and a piece of fine statuary in the Eastern Gardens." Victorian Heritage:

http://vhd.heritage.vic.gov.au/places/result_detail/21366?print=true

¹¹ *Evening Post*, 7 April 1897, p. 5. This is a detailed account of the development of the statue/s and the Wellington unveiling.

¹² *Wanganui Chronicle*, 18 August 1897, p. 2

¹³ *Wanganui Chronicle*, 4 January 1898, p. 2

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impress that he had only returned to political life at Ballance's request.

Stout commented that in erecting the monument to Ballance honouring his memory, that he hoped it would *"have another effect as well. It will, I am sure, recall to you, the citizens of Wanganui, and also those who visit your town, Mr John Ballance's name and his policy, and it may urge all of us to follow in the lines he laid down, namely of a true national policy, and one that will redound to the credit of the colony. There is no use for us to pretend to respect his name or revere his memory if we do not have an equally high ideal of what he thought our nation should be, and it is our duty to see that the democracy in this new country of ours shall not be destroyed by that which ruined not only (the) democracies of Greece and Rome, but has also seriously injured that of the great Republics of America and France."*¹⁴

The development of Moutoa Gardens (then called Market Square) began in 1898, and this included the arrival of two 6-pounder field guns which had been donated by the Government. The Borough Council initially decided to place these alongside the Moutoa Monument, provided there was enough room inside the Moutoa Monument's enclosure.¹⁵

In September 1899, the Council received a letter from L. Davis asking if a proposed memorial to Major Kemp, could be installed at the Market Square. The Mayor thought that this might be granted, as *"the monument would be in keeping with the proposed site."* He added that *"it might be advisable to remove the statue of the late Hon. J. Ballance from where it is now to the Market Square, as it was not seen where it was, and its removal would only cost £7.10s."* He added that the Moutoa Monument needed re-lettering and that *"it might also be advisable to shift that."* The shifting of the Band Rotunda to the new park was also discussed.¹⁶

Not everyone was pleased with this relocation of the statue, with 'An Admirer of Ballance' writing to the *Wanganui Chronicle*, stating that he thought it should stay where it was. He said that if Ballance's policies as Liberal Leader were being carried out by his successors, then he would have no objection to the

¹⁴ *Wanganui Chronicle*, 4 February 1898, p. 2

¹⁵ *Wanganui Chronicle*, 11 May 1898, p. 2

¹⁶ *Wanganui Chronicle*, 13 September 1899, p. 2

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shift. However, “where it stands now, is a place indicative of repose from the turmoil of politics and the surroundings are such as to make all who see the statue remember Mr Ballance as a man who had been cut down in the prime of his public life and now rests in quietude and would not, if he had the power, ask to be disturbed.”¹⁷

Others objected to the removal of the statue to the new park for different reasons, with ‘Another Anti-Humbug’ writing to the *Wanganui Herald* stating that Ballance’s statue and the Lion Monument should stay where they were – in their proper place. “The Moutoa monument is a work of art, and, though the intention was good, the statue erected to our late Premier is about as hideous a piece of sculpture as ever disgraced an artist.” The writer also objected to a statue of Kemp, when other local Maori he/she considered “far more” deserving: “were not even honoured at their deaths by one tap of a drum.”¹⁸

Despite these and other objections, the work to develop the Market Square into a garden park continued – including the relocation of Ballance’s statue. The Annual Report of Andrew Gilmour (the Borough Council’s Foreman of Works) for the period 1st April 1889 to 31 March 1900, stated that all the trees had been removed from the Market Square, and it had been “laid out in grass and shrubs, picket fence erected, and walks and terraces made; eleven seats (had) been fixed, and the Ballance Monument removed from Queen’s Park to the Market Square. The fence around the Moutoa Monument has been removed and the guns placed on the terrace; also notice boards erected in different parts of the grounds.”¹⁹

By February 1901, talk of creating a statue for Wanganui in memory of the recently deceased Queen Victoria also came to the fore. The *Wanganui Herald*’s editorial of 6 February 1901 stated that it was recognised that a statue worthy of the Queen would cost several thousand pounds and would have to be erected at (the newly renamed) Moutoa Gardens, or in one of the other public reserves in the Borough where few people would see it. “We have already had

¹⁷ *Wanganui Chronicle*, 20 September 1899, p. 2

¹⁸ *Wanganui Herald*, 25 September 1899, p. 1

¹⁹ *Wanganui Chronicle*, 9 May 1900, p. 2. The *Wanganui Herald* of 19 May 1900 (p. 3) includes a letter from someone condemning the sudden reappearance of the Moutoa Monument’s iron fence “decorating a private person’s property,” while the monument’s two guns were now placed on either side of “the statue of a private person.”

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experience of what a cheap statue means, and should not repeat the error, as the effigy of the late John Ballance is an eye-sore, and no more like the deceased statesman than a badly-executed caricature.” The editorial continued, stating that there were better ways to acknowledge the long reign of Queen Victoria, than erecting another “cheap and nasty” statue.²⁰

In 1913, during the long-running court case over the Kemp Monument (q.v.) located elsewhere on Moutoa Gardens, the subject of the Ballance statue also came up. One of the witnesses at the Kemp court case was William L. Morrison, a sculptor and artist, who had been the contractor for the Ballance Memorials at both Wanganui and in Parliament grounds at Wellington. Those two had cost £750. Morrison commented that he considered the Kemp statue to be “much worse than the Ballance statue.”²¹

Matters relating to the Ballance monument possibly then settled down for the next eight decades, as the statue stared out over the gradually changing park and the occasional new or altered monument. His two field guns also departed. This tranquillity, however, was not to last.

On 21 December 1994,²² shortly before the Pakaitore occupation, the statue was beheaded due to actions attributed to Ballance during his lifetime.²³

In February 1995, Te Runanga Pakaitore began a 79-day occupation of Moutoa Gardens. The park had been the site of an ancient pa named Pakaitore and this had been a traditional place of trade in pre-European times. Te Runanga Pakaitore claimed that the park had been set aside from the purchase of Wanganui, but the city denied this. Statues in the park were considered to be memorials to kupapa Maori – those perceived to be loyal to the Crown, and wording on some of them was considered offensive. For example, the Moutoa Monument refers to the victors at the Battle of Moutoa having fought “in defense of law and order against fanaticism and barbarism”, while the Kemp Memorial refers to Major Kemp (Te Rangihwinui Kepa) having successfully fought Te

²⁰ *Wanganui Herald*, 6 February 1901, p. 2

²¹ *Wanganui Chronicle*, 31 May 1913, p. 2

²² David Young, *Woven by Water: Histories of the Whanganui River* (Wellington, 1998), p. 286 (Footnote 16: Information attributed to Athol Kirk)

²³ Aroha Harris, *Hikoi: Forty Years of Maori Protest* (Wellington, 2004), pp. 127, 134

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Kooti, the “murderer of women and children.”²⁴

On 18th May 1995, after a great deal of publicity, court action, eviction orders and so on, the occupiers ended the occupation and quietly walked off Pakaitore. At that time it was discovered that what remained of Ballance’s body had disappeared.²⁵ In 2012, all that remains the Ballance Memorial at Moutoa Gardens is the plinth he once stood on - and his feet.²⁶

The occupation, however, began a new era of consultation, new relationships between Wanganui District Council and iwi and hapu representatives were formed. A tripartite agreement was put in place between the Wanganui District Council, Atihaunui-a-Paparangi (Whanganui Iwi) and the Crown, relating to the ownership and management of Pakaitore/Moutoa Gardens. The three parties signed this Agreement at Moutoa Gardens on 28 February 2001.²⁷

After some differences of opinion as to whether to return it to Moutoa Gardens, a replacement statue of John Ballance, seated and in bronze, was installed on the corner of Guyton and St. Hill Streets outside the Wanganui District Council building in October 2009.²⁸

²⁴ NZHistory: Moutoa Gardens Protest: <http://www.nzhistory.net.nz/media/photo/moutoa-gardens-protest>

²⁵ Young, p. 286 (footnote 16)

²⁶ *Wanganui Chronicle*, 31 January 2006: <http://www.wanganuichronicle.co.nz/news/alternatives-to-new-ballance-statue-considered/956698/>

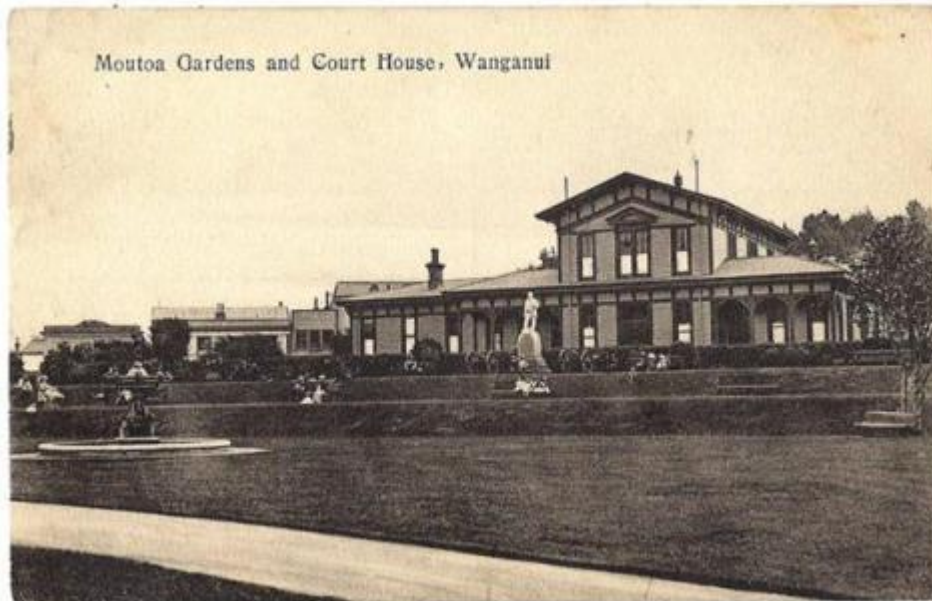
²⁷ Wanganui Library: Pakaitore Occupation: <http://www.wanganuilibrary.com/site/pages/te-aurawhiri/hitori/pakaitore-occupation.php>

²⁸ *Wanganui Chronicle*, 20 October 2009, <http://www.wanganuichronicle.co.nz/news/ballance-returns-to-muted-welcome/1011009/>

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John Ballance's statue, flanked by two old field guns and overlooking a number of park visitors, in Moutoa Gardens in the early 1900s. The fountain on the left now contains the 'Protection in Adversity' statue.²⁹

Bibliography

Harris, Aroha, *Hikoi: Forty Years of Maori Protest* (Wellington, 2004)

Mclvor, Tim, 'Ballance, John, 1839-1893', *The Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, Vol. Two, 1870-1900 (Wellington, 1993)

Young, David, *Woven by Water: Histories of the Whanganui River* (Wellington, 1998)

Also newspapers and online articles as referred to in the footnotes.

Architect/Designer: Plinth only: William L. Morrison (sculptor/contractor)

History of changes: Installed Queen's Park 1898. Moved to Moutoa Gardens 1899. Statue beheaded 1994. Rest of statue removed 1995.

Date Period: *The development sequence of a place, the likely age, duration of use or chronology of a place or area.*

²⁹ Postcard, Val Burr Collection.

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Rarity / Special Features: The base once held one of two statues of John Ballance, the other being in Parliament grounds.

Integrity: The base is the only part remaining of the memorial which included a statue of John Ballance.

Representativeness: The original design of the base and statue was a relatively common design for a memorial.

Context/Group Value: The statue base is situated within Pakaitore/Moutoa Gardens, a place of deep significance to local Maori which has a number of other highly significant memorials.

Diversity (Form and Features):

Fragility / Vulnerability: The statue was removed during the occupation of Moutoa Gardens and, as a monument in a public park, there is the potential for vandalism.

Summary of Significance:

Archaeological Qualities

The monument is pre-1900 and should be considered an archaeological site.

Architectural Qualities

The remaining Classically styled base is relatively common 19th century design four statues, as described in the press at the time. *“The memorial will take the form of a marble statue on a granite pedestal, enclosed in a neat iron railing, set in concrete.”*

It was designed by R R MacGregor, a Wellington architect who also designed Ballance’s statue in Parliament grounds. He designed commercial and residential buildings mainly in Wellington in the Late Victorian and Edwardian period. R R MacGregor had briefly been in partnership with James Hector McKay between 1898 and 1901. This partnership was changed to that of Crichton and McKay in 1901. R R MacGregor designed a number of buildings listed on the Wellington City Council Heritage Inventory. These include St James Church, 235 Adelaide Road, Hoses at 296-306 Tinakori Road, Orsini’s at 201 Cuba Street and the Watkins Building at 180-182 Cuba Street. Other

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buildings designed by him from the Auckland Architecture School Shepard files include the National Mutual Building Customs House Quay, St Ronan's Muritai, and the Royal Hotel.

Both statues of Ballance were sculpted by W L Morrison.

Historic Qualities

The statue base was erected, with the now removed statue, as a memorial to New Zealand's 11th Prime Minister, John Ballance. It was unveiled by former Premier Sir Robert Stout.

Technical Qualities

The use of stone for memorials is typical of the period.

Cultural Qualities

The statue has had considerable political sentiment and controversy attached to it. It was erected by the citizens of Wanganui to celebrate the life of one of their own who had succeeded in business and political life, representing the Rangitikei electorate. His party brought in Old Age Pensions and he supported women's suffrage but he did not live to see the women obtaining the vote, the year following his death. Its relocation from Queens Park to Moutoa Gardens caused controversy.

In 1994 the statue was beheaded and, in a nationally significant move, Moutoa Gardens occupied on 28 February 1995 by Te Rununga Pakaitore who considered that the Gardens had been set aside from the purchase of Wanganui. At some stage during the occupation the remainder of the statue had been removed. A new bronze statue of Ballance has been installed near the Council buildings at the corner of Guyton Street and St Hill Streets.

Reference Source:

Associated Pictures:

Date of Survey: 2012

Prepared by: Ian Bowman and Val Burr