

**309 DURHAM STREET NORTH – DURHAM ST METHODIST CHURCH**  
**Hearing: Tuesday 31 January 2012 at 9.30am**

**Summary**

The Durham Street Methodist Church which was situated at 309 Durham St North was an unreinforced masonry building constructed of stone in Gothic style. The building was divided into three parts – the Church, the annex (next to the western end of the Church) and the hall (next to the south side of the annex and south west corner of the Church).

All 3 parts were classified as category 1 by the Historic Places Trust.

The Church was constructed in 1864, the annex constructed as an addition in 1869 and the hall as a further addition in 1873. In the Church, ornate tied timber trusses spanned buttress columns supporting the roof structure. There was a gallery at first floor level encircling the central ground floor seating, that floor supported by the external walls and internal columns. Both the annex and the hall also had timber trusses supporting their rooves.

On the southern side of the church (and in front of the hall) was a more modern building known as Aldersgate which housed the Methodist City Mission and Church administration.

It appears that no structural strengthening had been carried out on the Church in the past and a structural report by R D Sullivan in September 2009 noted that the 3 parts of the building were earthquake prone and would collapse in a moderate earthquake.

Various strengthening options were proposed but none adopted. A fee submission was proposed by R D Sullivan in May 2010 to provide details for strengthening the design. It appears this was still being considered at the time of the September 2010 earthquake.

In the September 2010 earthquake the building suffered significant damage which would have required extensive reconstruction of the church hall and to a lesser extent the annex. The building was red stickered on 5 September 2010 and a full cordon recommended.

The Methodist Church then obtained reports from R D Sullivan and then Structex on the structural damage and whether or not the building could be repaired.

It was decided to remove the pipe organ from the main church building, it had been inspected by South Island Organ Company Ltd on 22 September 2010 and found to have sustained little damage in the earthquake.

Structex were engaged to ascertain whether it was safe to remove the organ and further advice was received from Structex following the Boxing Day aftershock. Details were provided of a safe access way via the Aldersgate Building adjoining the church and propping and fixing a steel bracket was proposed.

It was apparent that the damage following the September earthquake was considerably worse after the Boxing Day aftershock and that Structex was of the view that it was becoming less likely that the building would be able to be repaired and retained.

Arrow International (Tim Fahy) had been engaged by the Methodist Church to arrange for structural assessments and removal of the organ. Mr Fahy liaised with the Christchurch City Council Heritage and Planning sections in relation to the proposed removal of the organ.

The South Island Organ Company was engaged to enter the church and remove the organ.

These arrangements took place in the months and days prior to the 22 February 2011 earthquake.

On 22 February 2011 a group of 8 workmen who were part of the South Island Organ Company were at the church building assisting in the removal of the organ.

When the earthquake struck the church suffered a catastrophic collapse.

Scott Lucy, Paul Dunlop and Neil Stocker were with 3 of their work colleagues working inside the Church, dismantling and moving the organ. Two of their work colleagues were on the outside of the building. After the earthquake hit and the

church collapsed Messrs Lucy, Dunlop and Stocker were trapped under the rubble. Their 3 work colleagues managed to get out of the building.

Mr Lucy was last seen running down the stairs inside the church during the earthquake.

Mr Dunlop was last seen approximately 4 metres from the altar inside the church.

Mr Stocker was last seen standing on scaffolding inside the church.

The bodies of the 3 men were located by USAR on 23 February 2010.

### **Proposed Witnesses**

1. Peter Smith, Spencer Holmes Ltd, structural engineer
2. Christchurch City Council
3. Gregory Wright, Methodist Church
4. Tim Fahy, Arrow International, property manager
5. Gary Haverland, Structex, structural engineer
6. John Hargraves, South Island Organ Company Ltd
7. R D Sullivan, structural engineer (written material only)

### **Likely Issues**

1. Application of the Council's earthquake-prone policy to the building.
2. Assessment of the structural condition of the building such as to allow safe access and the measures put in place to provide safe removal of the organ.