



Savage Club Hall, 30 Railway Street

c. 1904

Use	Savage Club Hall	Historic Value	3 out of 5
Materials		Architectural Value	1 out of 4
NZHPT Registered	Not registered	Technical Value	1 out of 2
Valuation No	12200-402-00	Symbolic Value	1 out of 3
Legal Description	Pt Lot 2 DP 406 Lots 3 & 4 DP1835	Rarity	- out of 2
		Townscape Value	1 out of 2
		Group Value	- out of 2
		Overall	
		Cultural Heritage Value	7 out of 20
Reference	R1		

Description

The origin of the Eltham Savage Club building as a Methodist Church is clear in its simple rectangular plan form and steep-pitched gable roof, reflected in the porch at the end facing the street. Tall lancet gothic windows also indicate the original religious function. The original cladding was bevel-backed weatherboards, still evident on the front elevation, with other parts re-clad with modern material; some timber windows have been replaced with aluminium. The hall at the back still has its original weatherboards and double-hung windows.

History

The Savage Club building was formerly the Methodist Church and Parsonage. A hall was built behind the church for meetings, gymnasium and Sunday school. The church building was moved in 1979/80 to its present location on Railway Street, where it commenced being the Savage Club Hall.

The Savage Club is an organisation that began in London on 5 October 1857. A small group of literary men, journalists and artists gathered together seeking to establish a place of reunion where they might, in their hours of leisure, enjoy each others company within an atmosphere of good fellowship. The name Savage Club came from a poet Richard Savage, not because of his last name but because he quoted at this gathering "Henry Savage, a Penny-a Liner, was found dead of starvation in Convent Garden Market". The group were touched by this story and declared that "we must have a Savage Club, to immortalise the terrible incidents of London life". This was then the movement, which reached New Zealand many years later.

The movement in New Zealand began in Dunedin in 1886. At its highest point the movement involved 54 affiliated clubs hosting 11,000 memberships. Since then the times have slowed as only 28 clubs and 2,000 memberships remained in 1994.

The real 'Founder and First Rangatira' of the Eltham Savage Club was the late Claude Harrison. Claude was then a member of the Hawera Savage Club though residing in Eltham. Little was known about the club and how the association worked but it was due to the enthusiasm of Claude Harrison that the club was established and continued to run successfully for over 50 years.

Since its establishment the Eltham Savage Club has been held in high regard throughout the country. The Eltham Savage Club was diverse in its membership and many prominent savages would rise from the Eltham Hapu. After 50 years of the clubs existence the total number of members is 669, indicating a strong support for the club in the Eltham district.

The Eltham Pipe Band Hall was the first hall used to hold the official Koreros of the club, and this building was continuously used until circumstances changed in 1969. The club then moved to the Eltham Town Hall, but during this stay at the Town Hall interest in the club declined and numbers dropped away. In 1980, the Eltham Savage Club had its first Korero at their very own hall. The old Methodist Church was purchased and placed on a site on Railway Street. The hall breathed new life into the club and memberships rose again allowing the Savage Club to continue the association in the district.

In later years the hall has been used not only by the club but has provided a suitable venue for many seeking to hire the facility. During this time the hall been extensively restored including the exterior cladding, doors and windows.

Architect

Not known.

Builder

Not known.

Statement of Significance

The Savage Club building has strong historic and social value to the town, having served as the Methodist Church, and latterly as the home of the Savage Club – in both uses it is well known and has been well used by the people of the district for over 100 years. While of modest architectural interest, it is nevertheless a building typical of its time, and it provides some townscape interest in a back street of the town.

Sources

Everest F (1994) *The Days of Savagery: A History of the Eltham Savage Club*.

Date

June 2003