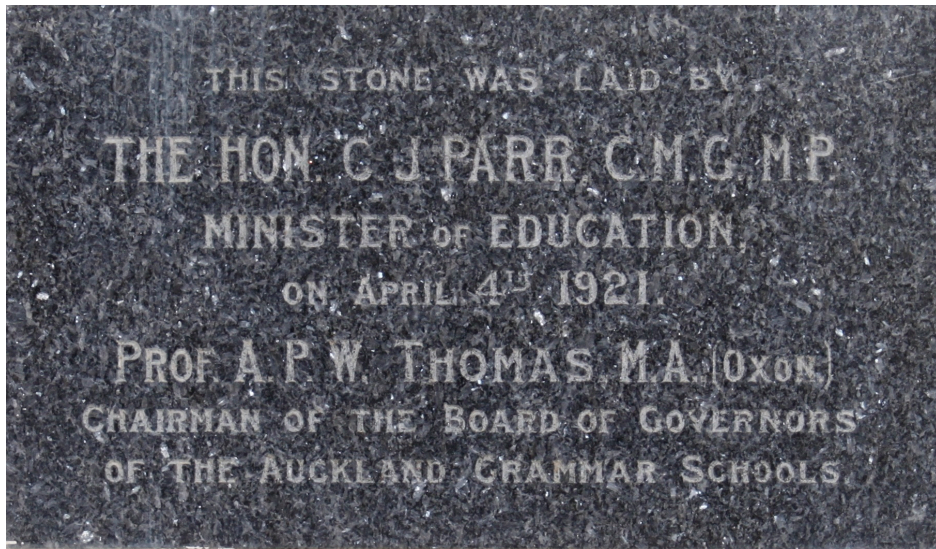


A HISTORY OF THE SCHOOL IN 100 OBJECTS

THE FOUNDATION STONE

Size: 24½ in x 42¾ / 640mm x 1090mm

Description: A polished granite stone high in biotite (a dark mica, causing the grey colour). There is an inscription.



THIS STONE WAS LAID BY
THE HON. C.J. PARR, C.M.C., MP.
MINISTER OF EDUCATION,
ON APRIL 4TH 1921.
PROF. A.P.W. THOMAS, M.A. (OXON.)
CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS
OF THE AUCKLAND GRAMMAR SCHOOLS

Discussion: The next day, *The New Zealand Herald* (page 6, column 3) led with:

NEW GRAMMAR SCHOOL.
BUILDING AT MOUNT ALBERT.
FOUNDATION STONE LAID.
CEREMONY BY MINISTER.

“The foundation stone of the Mount Albert Grammar School was laid yesterday... in the presence of a large gathering, including the senior pupils of the four primary schools in the district.” The ‘large gathering’ had an assembly of civic and educational worthies, including the mayors of Mt Albert and Auckland, Members of Parliament, Headmaster Tibbs and members of the Auckland Education and Grammar Schools Boards.

“In an eloquent peroration Professor Thomas emphasised the importance of a liberal education for the wellbeing of the country and the Empire.”

This was followed by Mr Parr: "I could hope ... that every boy and girl could attend this school for three or four years." Astoundingly, the building was ready for occupation by boys the following year. It was to be 80 years before girls arrived.

Mr Parr had more to say including mention of the cost of the building, £40,000. The stone was laid by the Minister, "using a silver trowel presented to him by the contractor, Mr C.F. Grevatt." The report in *The Auckland Star* (5 April 1921, page 7, column 2) referred to "a handsome silver trowel suitably inscribed."

Minister Parr presented the trowel to the Auckland War Memorial Museum. There are images of it online. The first one shows the trowel in a satin-lined box. It has an ivory handle



The engraving reads:

"Presented/To/The Hon. C.J. Parr/ C.M.G.M.P./ Minister of Education/on the Occasion of His Laying the /Commemorative Stone/of the/ Mt Albert Boy's [sic] Grammar School/on April 4th 1921. Then there was an engraving of the proposed school. It is somewhat different to the one that was actually built. The final engraved words are: 'W.A. Cumming F.M.Z.I.A./ Architect/W.J. Grevatt & Son/Contractors.'" The trowel is elaborately decorated.

The satin lining has the Royal Coat of Arms and the engravers name: A.Kohn./Watchmaker/And/Jeweller/Auckland N.Z./ Made In England.



The Hallmarks are enlarged: they are:



The makers name NEB/FEB (actual name could not be found), the Lion Passant is the Sterling Silver mark, the shield with the three sheaves is the mark of the Chester Assay Office and the stylised letter M is the year mark; 1912.



PROPOSED NEW GRAMMAR SCHOOL BUILDING AT AUCKLAND. TO RELIEVE THE CONGESTION AT THE MAIN BUILDING AT MOUNT EDEN: THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION, HON. C. J. PARR, LAYING THE FOUNDATION STONE ON THE SITE AT MOUNT ALBERT.

The above photograph is from the Auckland Libraries Sir George Gray Special Collection and was forwarded by Lucy Mackintosh, History Curator at the Auckland War Memorial Museum. There is no copyright on the image. The caption reads:

‘PROPOSED NEW GRAMMAR SCHOOL BUILDING AT AUCKLAND TO RELIEVE THE CONGESTION OF THE MAIN BUILDING AT MOUNT EDEN: THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION, HON. C.J. PARR, LAYING THE FOUNDATION STONE ON THE SITE AT MOUNT ALBERT.’

It shows Mr Parr standing, smiling, and giving an address. On his left is a lady sitting upright who seems to have a pencil and a notebook on her lap. She looks like a minute taker. To his right is a grander lady in a fox fur. Is she Mrs Parr?

The “senior pupils of the four primary schools” can be seen, girls in front, boys behind and standing at the back adults who may have been their teachers. The schools would have been Gladstone Primary School, Mt Albert School, Edendale Primary School, Owairaka District School. All these schools predate this school.

There are also boys of Auckland Grammar School and members of the public. The New Zealand flag is flying and the man in shirtsleeves and braces may be the foreman/workman of the contractor who would be doing the heavy work of mortaring in the stone. The car could only be a ministerial car.

Earlier, on 11 June 1919 the Schools’ Committee of the Auckland Grammar Schools Board of Governors met (proceedings are kept in the Auckland City Library), both Professor Thomas and Mr Parr were present. The first item on the handwritten report was:

“New Boys’ School Site”: The Committee had previously inspected Mr Taylor’s estate at Mt Albert, the price per acre asked for the site was £344-5-0; Mr Garland estimated the value at £300-0-0 per acre. After a full discussion it was agreed on the motion of Mr Parr.

“That the Board having inspected various sites is of the opinion that the area of 16½ acres of the Taylor estate at Alberton is the most suitable for the erection of a boys school. Further that application be made to the Education Department for the purchase of the site.” (In 1948 another 18 acres was gazetted to the School, *Land Taken for a Secondary School in the Borough of Mount Albert*).

Parr was born in New Zealand and later in life settled in England and died there. Thomas was born in England and in early life moved to New Zealand and died here. They both have biographies in Te Ara.

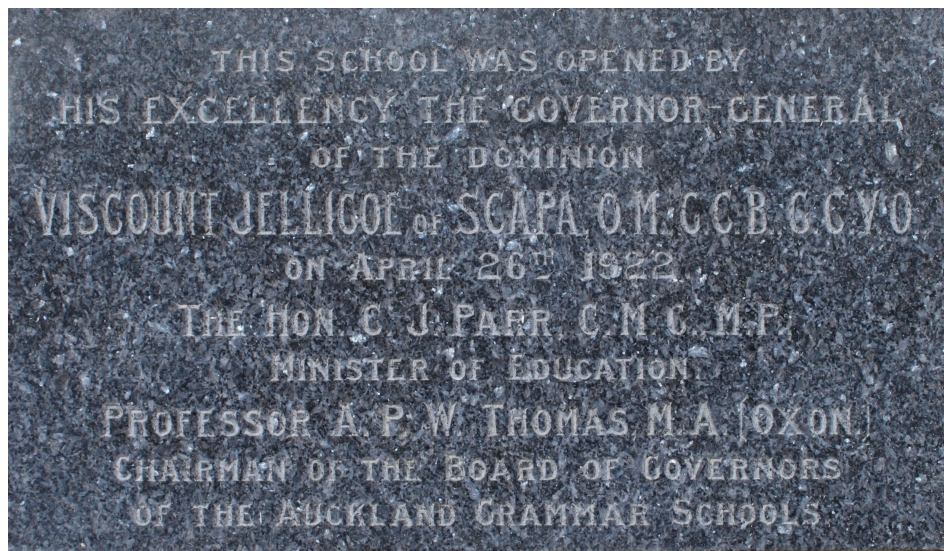
Parr was a driven man of many accomplishments, councillor, Mayor of Auckland, where he promoted town planning, the acquisition of parks and strongly resisted ‘skyscrapers’. He was a Cabinet Minister and as Minister of Education he had advanced ideas. He was New Zealand High Commissioner to the United Kingdom.

Thomas was a polymath of extraordinary breadth, as a young Oxford graduate he studied in four continental countries and worked out the complex life cycle of *Fasciola hepatica*, the sheep liver and fluke, a feat of great economic importance. After arrived in New Zealand he was one of three foundation Professors at the Auckland University College, teaching, alone, Geology, Botany and Zoology and helping out with Mathematics. He kept a full-on pace all his life. He remained Chairman until his death in December 1977.

Following him as Chairman was Dr E Robertson, then J Stanton, J Victor Macky and from 1952-1969 the first Old Boy, D Sumner, followed by MR Grierson and then two Old Boys, N Barclay and RV Eades. The last Chairman of that Board was Professor DIB Smith.

From mid 1987 to mid 1989, Dr AP McGeorge and Dr DJ McLennan were Chairmen of the short-lived Board of Governors of Mount Albert Grammar School for Boys. Tomorrows School was introduced in mid 1989 and, with it, the Mount Albert Grammar School Board of Trustees. The first Chairman was JF Timmins and then two Old Boys, PH Thorp and the present (2014) Chairman GJ Moyle.

There is a second foundation stone concerning the official opening of the School.



The inscription reads:

THIS SCHOOL WAS OPENED BY
HIS EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF THE DOMINION
VISCOUNT JELlicOE OF SCARPA O.M., G.C.B., G.C.V.O.
ON APRIL 26th 1922.
THE HON C.J. PARR G.M.C., M.P.
MINISTER OF EDUCATION
PROFESSOR A.P.W. THOMAS M.A. (OXON.)
CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS
OF THE AUCKLAND GRAMMAR SCHOOLS

The legal name of the Board at that time was Auckland Grammar School Board. It was not until 0 October 1955 that "An Act to amend the Auckland Grammar School Act 1899." changed the legal name to Auckland Grammar Schools Board, though the words "of Governors" was often added. (Legal names researched by Bob Eades).



THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL, LORD JELlicOE FORMALLY OPENING THE MOUNT ALBERT GRAMMAR SCHOOL AT AUCKLAND LAST WEEK.

This is another image from the Sir George Gray Special Collection at Auckland Libraries, courtesy of Lucy Mackintosh. The people in the photograph are the Headmaster, FW Gamble; the Hon George Fowles, the Governor-General, Lord Jellicoe, and Dr E Robertson, Vice-Chairman of the Auckland Grammar School Board. As the Governor General is standing, the chair he was sitting on is more visible. We still have seven of these chairs (now restored). One is illustrated below.

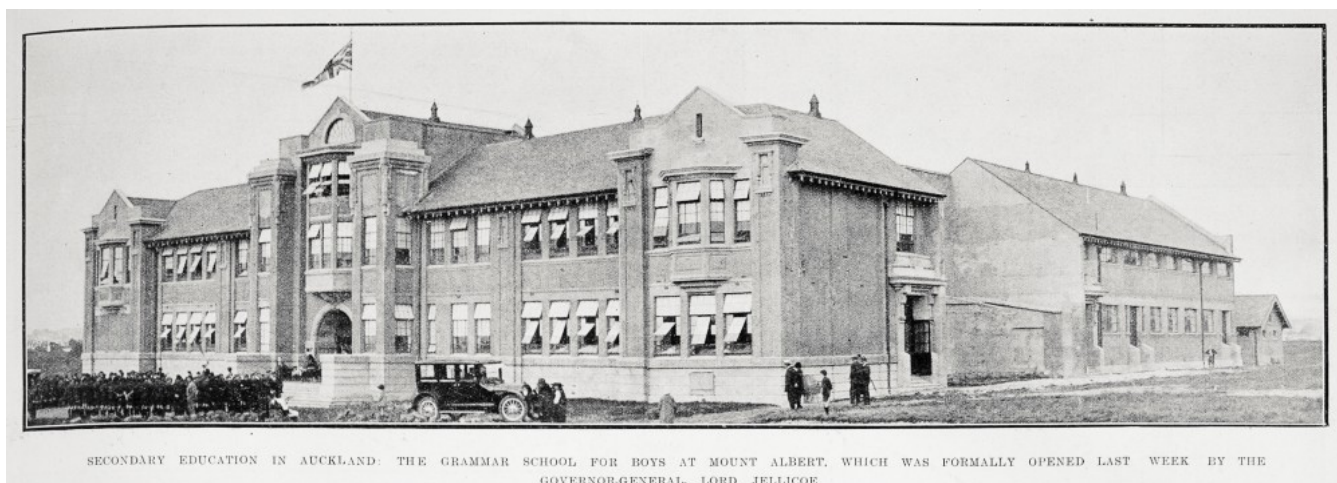


The Governor-General may have had to alter the date after the stone was prepared as the official opening was actually Thursday 25 May 1922. The *New Zealand Herald* reported on 26 May 1922 (page 8, column 1).

“NEW GRAMMAR SCHOOL.
THE OFFICIAL OPENING.
CEREMONY BY GOVERNOR.
CREATION OF TRADITIONS.
AN EXCELLENT SITE.”

“The new boys’ Grammar School at Mount Albert was officially opened yesterday afternoon by the Governor-General, Lord Jellicoe ... Drawn up in a semi-circle facing the entrance to the School were the boys of the new school ... while on the porch were seated members of the Auckland Education Board, Mount Albert Borough Council, University and others.”

There is a second image, from the same source, and on the same day.



It shows the guard of honour, the Union Flag, and a black motorcar with a chauffeur, obviously the Governor General's car. Around the corner, out of sight of dignitaries, is a small boy with a be-gowned figure looming over him. He's in trouble. One of the other two figures has a cane behind his back.

"His Excellency was received by Dr E Robertson, Vice-Chairman of the Governors and Mr F.W. Gamble headmaster of the new school. Lord Jellicoe then inspected the guard of honour of 100 boys of the cadet corps...

"His Excellency made reference to the other grammar schools... Speaking particularly to the boys, he impressed upon them their responsibility in creating traditions which would be handed on proudly in future. He reminded them of the debt they owed to their forefathers and the pioneers of the Empire..."

"The building is of semi-classical design, constructed of brickwork and reinforced concrete, cement plastered and tiled roof. The portion erected comprises 12 class rooms, six science rooms, library, drawing, masters' and principal's rooms and provided accommodation for 350 scholars."

Later in the day in *The Auckland Star* (page 6, column 7) Dr Robertson was reporting as saying that:

"He hoped that the association of the Lord Jellicoe's name with the school would be an incentive to service and loyalty to King and country. (Applause.)"

The Hon George Fowles, always ready with an opinion, ended his plea for more and smaller schools with:

"With its excellent material in staff and boys it should have a most successful career with traditions equal to those of the old Grammar School. (Applause.)"

The Admiral of the Fleet struck the right note with:

"'I wish you success in your work and play,' concluded Lord Jellicoe. 'I hope that you will soon be able to lower the colours of the old school. Once again I wish you the best of luck and will conclude by declaring the school open.' (Applause.)"

As we go back and forth we pass these stones many a time without much notice. Yet now and then passers-by do stop and glance at the terse inscriptions.

Brian Murphy