

## DUNCAN HOMESTEAD – 29 Greenaway Road, Rongotea



**Architect:** Benjamin Woolfield Mountfort

**Construction date:** 1891

**Visible materials:** Painted timber weatherboards and joinery, corrugated steel roof

**Architectural style:** Victorian Rustic Gothic

**Use/building type:** Residential

**Date and compiler:** Ian Bowman, December 2014

**Heritage New Zealand listing:** -

**Proposed category:** B

### PHYSICAL AND SOCIAL HISTORY<sup>1</sup>

#### Outline history

The house was designed in 1891 for Isaac Greenaway after whom the road is named. Greenaway moved back to Australia in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century having owned substantial landholdings in the Manawatu including part of the Oroua Downs estate. The Duncan family purchased the house in approximately 1920. The conservatory, garage, office, and first floor verandah have been additions made since its first construction.

#### Architect

Architect: Benjamin Woolfield Mountfort (1825-1898)<sup>2</sup>. Benjamin Woolfield Mountfort was born on 13 March 1825 in Birmingham, England, the eldest child of Thomas Mountfort and Susanna Wale Woolfield. He grew up in Birmingham and in 1844 was articled to the architect Richard Cromwell

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<sup>1</sup> Former NZHPT Manawatu Branch Committee files

<sup>2</sup> Lochhead, Ian, J., 'Mountfort, Benjamin Woolfield', *from the Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, updated 30-Oct-2012.

<http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/biographies/1m57/mountfort-benjamin-woolfield>, sighted 23 August 2013.

Carpenter of London. Carpenter was an influential Gothic Revival church architect. Mountfort's lifelong devotion to the Gothic style and his adherence to ecclesiological principles are directly attributable to his training with Carpenter. By 1848 he was practicing on his own account in London. Mountfort married Emily Elizabeth Newman in Chelsea in 1850 and they were both part of the first group of Canterbury Association settlers arriving in Lyttelton on board the Charlotte Jane on 16 December 1850.

Mountfort's architectural career started immediately with his first but unsuccessful major commission for the Church of the Most Holy Trinity, Lyttelton (1853). He designed churches for Kaiapoi, St. Bartholomew's (1855) and in Halswell, St. Mary's (1863). By 1857 Mountfort was in partnership with his brother-in-law Isaac Luck (the partnership ended in 1864) and in that year they became architects to the province of Canterbury. They were responsible for the design of the Canterbury Provincial Council Buildings, erected in three stages between 1858 and 1865. The stone chamber was regarded as the finest example of High Victorian Gothic architecture in New Zealand.

Mountfort was appointed supervising architect of the Christ Church Cathedral in 1873, a position he held for the rest of his career; his designs for the Canterbury Museum, built in stages between 1869 and 1882, and for Canterbury College, including the clock tower block (1877) and the Great Hall 1882, provided Christchurch with a group of Gothic Revival public buildings unrivalled elsewhere in the country. Add to these the designs for Holy Trinity Church, Avonside (1876), St. Paul's, Papanui (1877) and Trinity Congregational Church (1874), Mountfort became known as New Zealand's foremost church architect. Of his timber churches, St. Mary's, Parnell, Auckland, (1887-1898) marked the culmination of his practice as an ecclesiastical architect.

Mountfort's buildings played a major part in establishing the architectural character of Christchurch and gave permanent visual expression to the social and religious ideals of the Canterbury Association. Among New Zealand architects of the nineteenth century few can equal his dedication to his profession, and none can surpass the standards of design he maintained during a career of fifty years.

## ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

### Planning

The two storeyed timber framed house has an 'L' shaped floor plan with double gable facing the north with a gable at right angles extending the length of the house. A verandah wraps around the north east corner of the house between the central gable and an added conservatory on the east elevation. The rear has a wide lean-to and there is another verandah to the west.

The interior ground floor comprises living, dining, kitchen and service areas with a timber central staircase lit through a skylight with patterned leadlight. The upper floor has bedrooms, dressing and bathrooms. Clear coated and painted timber panelling, architraves and skirting are used throughout the interior.

Recent interior alterations have been designed by Wellington architect Nick Bevin.

No plans of the building have been sighted.

### Style

The house is designed in a simplified form of Gothic, termed Rustic Gothic, but with the essential Gothic characteristics of prominent steep gables, bay and oriel windows, and picturesque irregular massing. The strapwork under the eaves is a simplified version of ornate decoration resembling leather straps common in Jacobean and Elizabethan architecture. The use of verandah is a Colonial adaptation of the English style to take account of a more hospitable climate.

Largely derived from the cottage orné of the mid nineteenth century, Australasian examples abounded in the latter part of the nineteenth century influenced by pattern books such as those of Englishman, J C Loudon's *Encyclopaedia of Cottage, Farm and Villa Architecture*, and American, Calvert Laux's *Villas and Cottages Villas and Cottages*.

The style, sometimes referred to as rural Gothic, is usually employed on free-standing houses and in rural areas evoking the picturesque qualities of rural England.

### Construction and materials

The house is clad with rusticated timber weatherboards and it has joinery of four planed double hung sash windows with or without hoods, French doors and the main door is six panelled and has 12 paned sidelights and toplights. The lower bay window has leaded toplights. The entry is accentuated by ornate brackets with triangular shaped corbels either side while the verandah posts have ox-tongue chamfers. The upper bay to the north elevation is clad with timber shingles.

### Setting

The house is accessed from the Greenaway Road by a wide semi-circular drive and is set within extensive lawn areas. There are single large specimen trees around the property with fruit trees to the rear and hedges on the eastern boundary. A tennis court is located between the house and hedging. Beyond the lawn are paddocks with a ha ha dividing the two.

### REVIEW OF REPORT

Based on a review of the report and viewing of Council files, the assessment undertaken in 2014 for this building is still applicable as at April 2021.

### SUMMARY OF HERITAGE VALUES

The building has **moderate** to **high regional** significance for **physical, historic** and **cultural** heritage values.

The house has **high architectural** values as a unique interpretation of a popular 19<sup>th</sup> residential Gothic style, which has little of the characteristic decoration but maintains the essential forms, planning, and materials of the style.

The house has **moderate rarity** values as one of two houses in the Manawatu known to have been designed by the highly regarded Canterbury architect. With a number of his houses demolished in Canterbury, Mountfort design houses have become less common.

The house has **moderate representivity** values as a large, late Victorian, two storey, timber-framed house, of which there are many in the Manawatu District.

The house has **moderate authenticity** with the rear lean-to and conservatory added while there have been some interior modifications.

The house has **moderate associative** values with the Greenaway and Duncan **families**, with the latter having owned the house for over 90 years. It is also associated with Canterbury's most highly regarded 19<sup>th</sup> century architect, B. W. Mountfort, whose Gothic styled buildings helped establish Christchurch as the internationally pre-eminent Victorian Gothic city.

The house has **moderate pattern** values as one of a number of large rural houses scattered throughout the Manawatu built between the later 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries indicating the successful and profitable ownership and management of expansive farms, many of which have continued to be owned by the same families over many years.

Given the heritage values of the house, it has **moderate educational** values in the areas of architectural and farming history in the Manawatu.

#### **SOURCES**

Pers. Com. Mr Duncan

Former NZHPT Manawatu Branch Committee files