

TIMARU DISTRICT COUNCIL
HISTORIC HERITAGE ITEM RECORD FORM

HERITAGE ITEM NAME 'Claremont', former Rhodes Homestead

ADDRESS 222 Mt Horrible Road, Taiko

PHOTOGRAPH



(www)

DISTRICT PLAN ITEM NO. New **HNZ LIST No. & CATEGORY** 7379 / 2

LEGAL DESCRIPTION Lot 2 DP 78853

VALUATION NUMBER 2485006200

DATE OF CONSTRUCTION 1888

**ARCHITECT/DESIGNER/
BUILDER** Collins & Harman, architects

STYLE Domestic Gothic Revival

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

Two-storey dwelling with square footprint and multiple gabled roof forms. Return veranda on three sides. Grouped double-hung sash windows, limestone dressings, decorative corbelled eaves and gable ends, gabled entrance porch breaking through veranda on north-east elevation, veranda posts are paired at the corners. Lancet arched motifs over principal first floor windows, crockets atop gable ends.

MATERIALS/STRUCTURE

Bluestone (basalt) and Oamaru limestone, timber & slate.

ADDITIONS/ALTERATIONS

Unspecified additions (Collins & Harman, 1897). Conservatory removed from north-west elevation (mid-1940s).

SETTING

The dwelling stands on a large rural property on the north side of Mt Horrible Road, west of its intersection with Brien Road. A chapel (1955) stands close to the west corner of the homestead and a separate L-shaped dormitory wing is to the south/south-west. A group of related farm buildings stand to the south-west of the homestead; they are on the south side of Mt Horrible Road and occupy a separate land parcel. The extent of setting is limited to the immediate environs of the homestead, notwithstanding the potential archaeological values of the site as a whole.

HISTORY

'Claremont' homestead was built by George Hampton Rhodes (1862-1914) in 1888, following his marriage to Alice Henrietta Thierens (1862-1938) in September 1887. The couple had three children. Rhodes had acquired the property, which had originally been part of 'The Levels' run, in 1884 and held it until 1908. He was the son of George Rhodes of 'The Levels' and part of the large Rhodes family that built a number of grand country homes in Canterbury in the later 19th century. Until 1901 'Claremont' was the venue for the Rhodes' busy social life; it was leased by Governor General Lord Ranfurly for several months in 1902. After 1901 the Rhodes family were in England for a decade whilst their children were being educated. Farms were balloted in the Claremont Settlement, created by the subdivision of the Claremont Estate after government purchase, in August 1912. HT Rosendale held the homestead block at that time, having purchased it from Donald Macfarlane in 1911. The Catholic Marist Brothers bought the property in 1932 for use as a training centre for priests, known as St Joseph's Novitiate. The Brothers built a chapel beside the homestead in 1955 and, after 1980, the use later changed to an alcohol and drug rehabilitation centre. In 1999 John West purchased the property and converted it for use as a boutique hotel and wedding venue. In the same year the remains of priests buried near the homestead were removed and reinterred in Temuka Cemetery. It has since passed through other hands, most recently in 2018, and is now called 'Claremont Castle'.

HISTORICAL AND SOCIAL SIGNIFICANCE

'Claremont' has historical significance for its association with GE Rhodes and his family and as a demonstration of the financial and social capital that was acquired by some of South Canterbury's landed gentry in the later 19th century. The use of the Rhodes' homestead for institutional purposes from the 1930s through to the 1980s illustrates a common pattern of later use for some of New Zealand's 'mansion' houses, as does the late 20th century conversion of the building to a boutique hotel.

CULTURAL AND SPIRITUAL SIGNIFICANCE

'Claremont' has cultural value as a demonstration of the way of life of the Rhodes family (1888-1901) and those who subsequently lived and worked at the property, including the Marist Brothers in the mid-20th century.

ARCHITECTURAL AND AESTHETIC SIGNIFICANCE

'Claremont' has architectural significance as the work of leading Christchurch architects, JJ Collins (1855-1933) and RSD Harman (1859-1927). Collins and Harman, who were the successors to the practice established by William Armson in 1870, designed a number of houses for members of Canterbury's rural elite in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, including, for GH Rhodes' brothers, 'Blue Cliffs' for RH Rhodes in 1889 and AEG Rhodes' Christchurch town house 'Te Koraha' (1883-1903). The firm also designed 'Meadowbank' at Irwell for a cousin, GE Rhodes (1891). The 1903 *Cyclopedia of New Zealand* noted of the practice's houses that '[t]hese are amongst the finest family residences in New Zealand, and in point of design and architecture they are unsurpassed in the colony.' A perspective drawing for the house shows that some details were omitted from the dwelling as built, possibly due to cost.

TECHNOLOGICAL AND CRAFTSMANSHIP SIGNIFICANCE

'Claremont' has technological and craftsmanship significance for its stone masonry construction and ornamental detailing. The bluestone was quarried on site and the Oamaru stone came from Thomas Teschemaker's Otaio estate'; Teschemaker was Alice Rhodes' uncle.

CONTEXTUAL SIGNIFICANCE

'Claremont' has contextual value as the defining historic feature within a mature garden and landscape setting. The 1955 chapel close to the homestead was designed in sympathy with it.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND SCIENTIFIC SIGNIFICANCE

As the building pre-dates 1900 its site has potential archaeological value relating to the structure's construction and the development of the property.

SUMMARY OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

'Claremont' has overall heritage significance to Claremont and Timaru district as a whole. The homestead has historical significance for its association with George and Alice Rhodes and cultural value as a demonstration of the way of life of a second generation settler family, as well as those who have lived and worked at the homestead since. 'Claremont' has architectural significance as the work of Christchurch architects Collins & Harman and technical and craftsmanship significance for its stone construction and detailing. 'Claremont' has contextual value as a local historic feature and its site has potential archaeological value in view of the homestead's pre-1900 date of construction.

HERITAGE CATEGORY

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REFERENCES

- *Timaru Herald* 25 June 1897, p. 1; 23 April 1908, p. 5; 4 May 1910, p. 2; 11 February 1911, p. 8; 20 December 1915, p. 12; 30 January 2013, 24 August 2017 & 28 February 2018 (available online).
- *Lyttelton Times* 15 January 1908, p. 10.
- *Waimate Daily Advertiser* 20 October 1913, p. 3.
- *Star* 9 February 1920, p. 6.
- *Sun* 30 December 1915, p. 4.
- *NZ Times* 16 March 1912, p. 5.
- *South Canterbury Times* 12 September 1887, p. 3; 16 September 1887, p. 3.
- *Press* 14 February 1888, p. 8; 5 March 1888, p. 6; 11 May 1914, p. 9; 6 January 1938, p. 2.
- *Ashburton Guardian* 16 March 1912, p. 4; 22 August 1912, p. 4.
- *NZ Herald* 4 December 1900, p. 5.
- *Cyclopedia of New Zealand – Canterbury Provincial District* Christchurch, 1903; available online.
- <http://www.heritage.org.nz/the-list/details/7379>
- Laura Dunham 'The Domestic Architecture of Collins and Harman in Canterbury, 1883-1927' MA thesis, University of Canterbury, 2013; available online.
- Terence Hodgson *The Big House – Grand and Opulent Houses in Colonial New Zealand* Auckland, 1991.
- <http://castleclaremont.co.nz>



Extent of setting, limited to immediate environs, 222 Mt Horrible Road, Taiko.



Land parcel as a whole; red star denotes homestead, yellow marks Lot 4 DP 78853, which is a closed burial ground (NZGZ 2000, p. 2961).