

**TIMARU DISTRICT COUNCIL**  
**HISTORIC HERITAGE ITEM RECORD FORM**

---

**HERITAGE ITEM NAME** Levels Cottage (Old Levels Homestead)

**ADDRESS** 411 Pleasant Point Highway, Levels

**PHOTOGRAPH**



(HNZPT)

**FORMER DISTRICT PLAN ITEM No.** No. 86      **HNZ LIST No. & CATEGORY** 4906 / 1  
(at time of assessment)

**LEGAL DESCRIPTION** Private historic reserve on Lot 1 DP 18883

**VALUATION NUMBER** 2484000100

**DATE OF CONSTRUCTION** c.1854

**ARCHITECT/DESIGNER/  
BUILDER** George and Elizabeth Rhodes, owner/builders

**STYLE** Colonial vernacular

**PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION**

Single storey building with rectangular footprint and gabled roof. Principal elevation faces east. Small, 4-pane windows, upright slab walls and slab doors with prominent hinges. Rock with historic information plaque mounted on it is located close to the façade (1985).

**MATERIALS/STRUCTURE**

Pit-sawn slab timber, thatched roof, clay wall lining and floor.

**ADDITIONS/ALTERATIONS**

Restored/partially reconstructed (late 1940s/pre-1951). Repairs and re-thatching (1961, 1963-64, 1971). Rethatched (1993). Repairs and rethatching (2012-13).

**SETTING**

The cottage stands within its own historic reserve on a rural property on the west side of Pleasant Point Highway, almost directly opposite its intersection with Levels Plain Road. Access is via a long driveway and the cottage is only just visible from the roadway. A later homestead is located to the south. The extent of setting is the curtilage of the historic reserve on which the building is located, consistent with the Heritage NZPT extent of setting.

## **HISTORY**

Brothers George, William and Robert Rhodes applied for land in South Canterbury, between the Opihi and Pareora Rivers, in late 1850 and 1851. 'The Levels' station, named for the Rhodes' home district in Yorkshire, was stocked with sheep shipped from Banks' Peninsula in January 1852. George (1816-64) married Elizabeth Wood in May 1854 and the couple built a slab cottage at 'The Levels'; this superseded the original V-hut on the site. The cottage was only briefly the Rhodes' home, being replaced by larger houses erected in 1856 and 1862. Most of the station was sold to Matthew Holmes, agent for the Canterbury and Otago Land Association, in 1865. George Rhodes had died at Purau, Banks' Peninsula in June of the previous year. From 1865 the station was managed by Donald McLean, under the general management of WS Davison of the New Zealand and Australian Land Company. Charles Orbell then managed the property from 1876 until 1904, when it was acquired by the government and broken up in to smaller farm lots. Orbell, who was chairman of the Levels County Council, bought the homestead block and lived there until his death in 1925. Orbell's son held the property in the 1940s, around the time when Acland published his history of the Canterbury runs. In 1946 the cottage was given to the South Canterbury Historical Society and it was subsequently restored in time to mark the centenary of 'The Levels' station. The cottage and its immediate setting was gazetted as a private historic reserve in 1960. Heritage NZPT controls and manages the reserve. The cottage has been restored and repaired on a number of occasions since the late 1940s.

## **HISTORICAL AND SOCIAL SIGNIFICANCE**

Levels Cottage has high historical significance for its association with the Rhodes family and the development of pastoralism in South Canterbury. It is one of the oldest dwellings in South Canterbury.

## **CULTURAL AND SPIRITUAL SIGNIFICANCE**

Levels Cottage has cultural significance as a demonstration of the way of life of its original occupants and the esteem in which it is held as a historic place.

## **ARCHITECTURAL AND AESTHETIC SIGNIFICANCE**

Levels Cottage has architectural value as a colonial vernacular dwelling that was built to be fit for purpose.

## **TECHNOLOGICAL AND CRAFTSMANSHIP SIGNIFICANCE**

Levels Cottage has high technological and craftsmanship significance for its timber, earth and thatch construction using methods that enabled early colonial settlers such as the Rhodes to build their own homes from readily available materials.

## **CONTEXTUAL SIGNIFICANCE**

Levels Cottage has contextual value as a historic feature within a rural property north-west of Washdyke and Timaru. There is a brick lined well on the property which is thought to date to the 1850s also. A number of other heritage buildings associated with the Rhodes family can be found in Timaru district and other parts of Canterbury, including the Claremont homestead (1890) and the Purau Station homestead (1854).

## **ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND SCIENTIFIC SIGNIFICANCE**

As the cottage pre-dates 1900 its site has potential archaeological significance relating to the structure's construction and the development of 'The Levels' station.

## SUMMARY OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

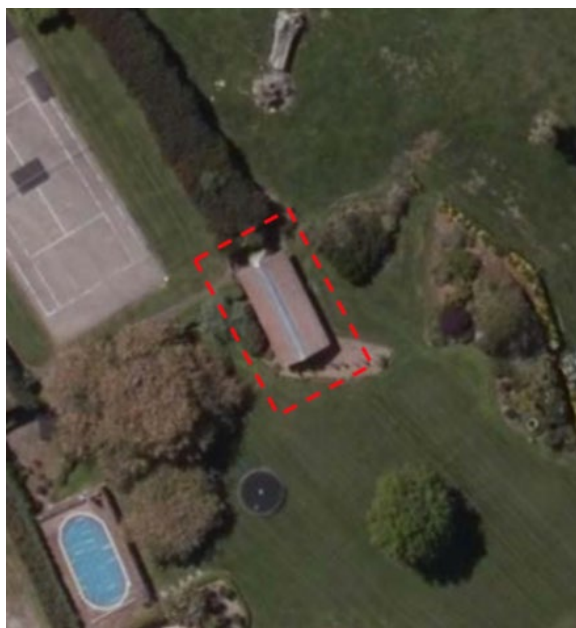
Levels Cottage (Old Levels Homestead) has high overall heritage significance to Levels and Timaru district as a whole. The cottage has high historical significance for its association with George and Elizabeth Rhodes and the development of South Canterbury and cultural significance as a valued place of historic interest and importance. Levels Cottage has architectural value as a colonial vernacular dwelling and high technological and craftsmanship significance for its timber, earth and thatch construction. Levels Cottage has contextual value as a historic feature that is associated with a number of other Rhodes' family heritage buildings; its site has potential archaeological significance in view of the building's pre-1900 date of construction.

## HERITAGE CATEGORY

A

## REFERENCES

- *Timaru Herald* 25 June 1864, p. 4; 11 June 1914, p. 6.
- *South Canterbury Times* 10 July 1890, p. 3.
- *Lyttelton Times* 3 July 1852, p. 8; 21 June 1864, p. 4; 14 March 1865, p. 4.
- *Cyclopedia of New Zealand – Canterbury Provincial District* Christchurch, 1903; available online.
- <https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/1r6/rhodes-george>
- <http://www.heritage.org.nz/the-list/details/4906>
- LGD Acland *The Early Canterbury Runs* Christchurch, 1946.



Extent of setting, as per Heritage NZPT list entry, 411 Pleasant Point Highway, Levels.



Land parcel as a whole, cottage site marked by star.



Couple at the Levels, possibly George and Elizabeth Rhodes, c.1860?. South Canterbury Museum, Timaru.