

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

---

**HERITAGE ITEM NAME** Anglican Church of the Holy Innocents  
**ADDRESS** 681 Rangitata Gorge Road, Mount Peel, Peel Forest

**PHOTOGRAPH**



(HNZPT)

**FORMER DISTRICT PLAN ITEM No.** No. 55      **HNZ LIST No. & CATEGORY** 1976 / 2  
(at time of assessment)

**LEGAL DESCRIPTION** Pt RS 7953 & Pt RS 12804

**VALUATION NUMBER** 2464002700

**DATE OF CONSTRUCTION** 1868-69

**ARCHITECT/DESIGNER/  
BUILDER** Edward Ashworth, architect; William Brassington,  
stonemason

**STYLE** Early English Gothic Revival

**PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION**

Single-storey building with rectangular footprint and gabled roof. Gabled vestry at west end; entrance porch on north elevation. Lancet arched windows, some having paired lights. Belfry at west end atop gable end. Random rubble stone walls with dressed quoins and window surrounds in contrasting colour. Porch is open with dressed stone arcade of cusped lancet arches.

**MATERIALS/STRUCTURE**

Rangitata river boulders and Mount Somers stone, timber and corrugated iron.

**ADDITIONS/ALTERATIONS**

Memorial stained glass windows installed (1889, 1904, 1908, 1920, 1929, 1943). Earthquake damage repaired (2016-17).

**SETTING**

The church is set within a churchyard and located at the western terminus of a long drive that comes off the west side of Rangitata Gorge Road, north of the bridge across the Lynn Stream. The church can be viewed in the distance from the roadway; the Mount Peel Station homestead is located to the north of the site. The extent of setting encompasses the northern portion of the two land parcels on which the church and its churchyard are located.

## **HISTORY**

The Church of the Holy Innocents was built on Mount Peel Station by John Barton Arundel Acland (1823-1904) in 1868-69. Acland later gifted the property to the Anglican Church Property Trustees. The church was intended for use by station staff and their families and was first used in May 1869. It was dedicated on 12 December 1869 by Bishop Harper. Acland had emigrated to New Zealand from England in 1854 and took up the Mount Peel, Mt Possession, Mt Somers and Orari Gorge runs in 1855. Initially in partnership with Charles Tripp, Acland retained the Mount Peel station when the partnership was dissolved in 1862. He was a member of parliament from 1865 until 1899 and a long standing chairman of the Mount Peel Road Board. Acland was a lay member of the general synod of the Anglican church and was married to Emily Harper, the eldest daughter of Bishop Harper, in 1860. The couple had ten children, three of whom died in infancy. Acland was buried in the churchyard at Holy Innocents in 1904; along with other members of the family, the writer Dame Ngaio Marsh, who was a friend of Sir Hugh Acland, is also buried in the churchyard. After suffering damage in the 2010 Canterbury earthquake, the church was repaired and then reopened by Bishop Matthews in September 2017. The church is part of the Geraldine parish and a service is held there annually on the first Sunday after Christmas. It is also the venue for weddings and other ceremonies.

## **HISTORICAL AND SOCIAL SIGNIFICANCE**

The Anglican Church of the Holy Innocents has historical significance for its association with John and Emily Acland, their family and descendants. The church demonstrates John Acland's commitment to the Anglican church, his sense of duty to his staff and their families, and the ongoing relationship between the church and the Acland family.

## **CULTURAL AND SPIRITUAL SIGNIFICANCE**

The Anglican Church of the Holy Innocents has cultural and spiritual significance as a place of Anglican worship and as a memorial to three of Emily and John Acland's infant children, Emily, Helen and Abner. The stained glass windows inside the church are also part of the building's memorial function.

## **ARCHITECTURAL AND AESTHETIC SIGNIFICANCE**

The Anglican Church of the Holy Innocents has high architectural significance as a Gothic Revival style church designed by English architect Edward Ashworth (1814-96). After training in England, Ashworth lived and worked in Australia, New Zealand and Hong Kong in the mid-1840s; he then returned to England in 1846 and established a practise in Exeter. Ashworth became known for his ecclesiastical architecture. As the Rev PLD Acland, who was then sub-dean of Exeter Cathedral, gifted Ashworth's plans to John Acland it would appear a family connection explains the architect's involvement in the project. Emily Acland, John Acland's wife, modified Ashworth's design to include the belfry on the gable end.

## **TECHNOLOGICAL AND CRAFTSMANSHIP SIGNIFICANCE**

The Anglican Church of the Holy Innocents has high technological and craftsmanship significance for its stone construction and detailing, as well as the stained glass windows later installed in the building. Master stonemason William Brassington (1840-1905) was also responsible for the decorative stonework in the Canterbury Provincial Council chambers in Christchurch (1864-65, damaged) and he built the Timeball Station in Lyttelton (1876, destroyed). The 1889 window *Christ and the Disbelief of St Thomas* is the only one in Canterbury to show the influence of the Aesthetic Movement in its design (Ciaran, p. 39). English Arts and Crafts stained glass artist Karl Parsons designed two windows installed in the church; *The Christ-Child with Faith and Charity* (1919-20) being the first Arts and Crafts style window to be erected in the Geraldine parish (Ciaran, p. 47).

## CONTEXTUAL SIGNIFICANCE

The Anglican Church of the Holy Innocents has contextual value as a historic feature within the Mount Peel landscape and for its relationship with the Mount Peel homestead (heritage item # 54), which was built by the Aclands in 1865-67.

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND SCIENTIFIC SIGNIFICANCE

As the church pre-dates 1900 its site has potential archaeological significance relating to the structure's construction and the early colonial development of the wider property. It is noted that the church site has been a place of burial since the 1860s.

## SUMMARY OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

The Anglican Church of the Holy Innocents has high overall heritage significance to Peel Forest and Timaru district as a whole. The church has historical significance for its association with the Acland family and cultural and spiritual significance as a demonstration of the way of life of all those who lived and worked on the Mount Peel Station. The Anglican Church of the Holy Innocents has high architectural significance as the work of Edward Ashworth with input from Emily Acland and high technical and craftsmanship significance for its stone construction by William Brassington and its stained glass windows. The Anglican Church of the Holy Innocents has contextual value as a historic feature within the Mount Peel landscape and its site has potential archaeological significance in view of the church's mid-19<sup>th</sup> century date of construction.

## HERITAGE CATEGORY

A

## REFERENCES

- *Timaru Herald* 4 September 2017 (available online).
- *Temuka Leader* 24 May 1904, p. 3.
- *Press* 31 January 1871, p. 2; 12 August 1933, p. 12.
- *Otago Daily Times* 30 October 1868, p. 2.
- *Colonist* 4 December 1868, p. 7.
- <http://www.heritage.org.nz/the-list/details/1976>
- F Ciaran 'Stained Glass in Canterbury New Zealand, 1860-1988' PhD thesis, University of Canterbury, 1992.
- <http://anglicansingeraldine.wixsite.com/anglicansingeraldine/holy-innocents-mount-peel>
- *Cyclopedia of New Zealand – Canterbury Provincial District* Christchurch, 1903; available online.
- <http://sites.rootsweb.com/~nzlscant/peel.htm>
- G Wilson 'Mount Peel Station 1856-1982: a historical study of the development of a high-country run in Canterbury, New Zealand' Lincoln College, University of Canterbury, 1982.
- GW Harte *Mount Peel is a Hundred – The Story of the first high country station in Canterbury* 1956.
- <https://trove.nla.gov.au/people/1244949?c=people>
- <https://facultyonline.churchofengland.org/CHR/ActorDetails.aspx?actorid=4032>
- <https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/1b30/brassington-william>



Extent of setting, limited to churchyard and including both land parcels, 681 Rangitata Gorge Road, Peel Forest.

TABLE 2: A SUMMARY OF THE STAINED GLASS WINDOWS INSTALLED IN THE CHURCH OF THE HOLY INNOCENTS, MOUNT PEEL STATION.

Date	Position	Donor	In Memory	Makers
1889	north east		Micheal Mitton manager of Mount Peel for 15 years	Cox and Buckley, London
1904	south east	Emily Weddell Acland	her daughter Lucy Alice Dyke Thomson	Cox and Buckley, London
1908	east	J.B.A. Acland's children	J.B.A. Acland & E.K. Acland	Powell of London
1917	north east	Frederick Villebors Lysaught	his wife: Emily Dyke Lysaught	Parsons of London
1929	south west	Hugh Thomas Dyke and Evelyn Mary Acland	their two sons: Geoffrey & Mary	Parsons of London
1943	south	N.Z. Sheep- owner's Federation	H.D. Acland	R.H. Fraser of Dunedin

Wilson thesis, p. 92, describing the stained glass windows in the church. [Note that Lysaught window is incorrectly dated as 1917.]