

TIMARU DISTRICT COUNCIL
HISTORIC HERITAGE ITEM RECORD FORM

HERITAGE ITEM NAME 'The Croft', former Orbell Residence
ADDRESS 12 Park Lane / 15 St Johns Avenue, Timaru

PHOTOGRAPH



(www)

FORMER DISTRICT PLAN ITEM NO. NO. 8 **HNZ LIST No. & CATEGORY** 2073 / 2
(at time of assessment)

LEGAL DESCRIPTION Lot 2 DP 11024

VALUATION NUMBER 2496062400

DATE OF CONSTRUCTION 1907

**ARCHITECT/DESIGNER/
BUILDER** Basil Hopper, architect; NB Tooth, contractor

STYLE English Domestic Revival

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

Two-and-a-half storey house with an irregular rectangular footprint and a multiplicity of gabled and hipped roof forms. Grouped multi-pane casement windows, exposed rafters, prominent fluted chimneys and board and batten detailing at first floor level. Exposed chimneybreast with patterned brickwork. Entrance porch on northern elevation has timber posts and curved brackets beneath a projecting first floor bay. Balconies at first floor level have simple balusters. Voyseyesque gabled bay on east elevation has circular window and triangular oriel beneath shingled gable end.

MATERIALS/STRUCTURE

Brick and roughcast plaster cladding, Marseilles tile roofing.

ADDITIONS/ALTERATIONS

Return veranda enclosed (date unknown). Conversion to rest home facility (post-1968).

SETTING

The property is located on the west side of Park Lane, south of its intersection with June Street and immediately to the north of St Johns Avenue. It stands at some distance from the roadway within a mature garden setting. Craighead Diocesan School for Girls lies to the west. The extent of scheduling is the immediate setting of the house and the garden through which it is approached from Park Lane, rather than the land parcel as a whole.

HISTORY

'The Croft' was built for Robert Leslie and Ellie (nee Ulrich, c.1875-1936) Orbell, who married in 1907 and had two children. Leslie Orbell (1868-1939) was a civil servant for the first 18 years of his career; he then took up residence in Timaru in 1901 and started business as a land agent and sharebroker. Orbell also part-owned a sheep run and was a member of the South Canterbury Hunt Club and secretary of the Timaru A & P Association. He was closely involved in the development of the Christchurch Golf Club at Shirley and the Timaru Golf Club. Leslie Orbell's cousin Ivan (1889-1914) later became architect Basil Hooper's pupil and, before his death during WWI, he was involved in the design of the AS Orbell house at Waikouaiti (1915) and the Ritchie house (1914) in Dunedin. (The Ritchies and Orbells were related by marriage). Leslie Orbell sold The Croft after his wife's death but remained living in Park Lane. The house was later owned by James Grant, who bequeathed it to the Presbyterian church in 1968. The building is now part of The Croft Rest Home and Hospital, which is run by Presbyterian Support Services.

HISTORICAL AND SOCIAL SIGNIFICANCE

'The Croft' has historical significance for its association with the Orbell family and the development of suburban Timaru. The house represents the wealth and social standing of Timaru's business elite in the early 20th century and the later 20th century conversion of some large-scale upper-class homes to other uses.

CULTURAL AND SPIRITUAL SIGNIFICANCE

'The Croft' has cultural value as a demonstration of the way of life of the Orbells and the social life they enjoyed while in residence.

ARCHITECTURAL AND AESTHETIC SIGNIFICANCE

'The Croft' has high architectural significance as an example of the residential work of leading New Zealand architect Basil Hooper. Hooper (1876-1960) was born in India and arrived in New Zealand as a child. He served a building apprenticeship in Cambridge and then served articles with Dunedin architect JL Salmond, finishing with him in 1900. Between 1901 and 1904 Hooper worked in London; he then returned to Dunedin where he established his practice. Hooper was a follower of the English Arts and Crafts movement and greatly influenced by English architect Charles Voysey. He moved to Auckland in 1923 and continued to design, predominately, houses there. Construction of the Orbell house was overseen by Timaru architect T Coulthard-Mullions (1878-1957), who was the designer of the former Hay's building in Stafford Street (1908, heritage item # 29). Mullions designed and built his own home at 8 Park Lane before 1913. Hooper published the Orbell house in the architectural magazine *Progress* in July 1910. The description of the building at that time noted the separate servants' wing and that the house was built for the sun and the 'magnificent views'. Biographer Ralph Allen has described the Orbell house as one of the largest and most elaborate designed by Hooper.

TECHNOLOGICAL AND CRAFTSMANSHIP SIGNIFICANCE

'The Croft' has technological and craftsmanship significance for its construction and detailing.

CONTEXTUAL SIGNIFICANCE

'The Croft' has contextual significance as a local landmark within the suburb of Highfield. A large number of other notable houses are located in the area, including the Craighead School House (heritage item # 9) and Herbert Hall's house 'Park Lane'. Although now redeveloped as part of a rest home facility, the house retains its visibility from the roadway thanks in part to its size and scale.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND SCIENTIFIC SIGNIFICANCE

As the house post-dates 1900 any potential archaeological significance its site may have would likely relate to the colonial development of the Highfield area.

SUMMARY OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

'The Croft' has overall heritage significance to Timaru and Timaru district as a whole. The house has historical significance for its association with the Orbell family and cultural value as a demonstration of the way of life of its former residents. 'The Croft' has high architectural significance as an English Domestic Revival style house designed by notable Dunedin architect Basil Hooper and technical and craftsmanship significance for its construction and detailing. 'The Croft' has contextual significance as a local landmark and in relation to other notable 19th and early 20th century houses in the area. As 'The Croft' post-dates 1900 its site may have limited archaeological value.

HERITAGE CATEGORY

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REFERENCES

- *Timaru Herald* 31 July 1907, p. 1; 3 August 1907, p. 2; 15 February 1909, p. 4; 28 May 1909, p. 7.
- *Press* 4 September 1931, p. 3; 25 June 1936, p. 2; 12 December 1936, p. 24; 24 April 1937, p. 30; 14 October 1939, p. 2; 4 December 1939, p. 3.
- *Otago Witness* 17 February 1909, p. 51.
- *Auckland Star* 27 June 1929, p. 7.
- *Evening Star* 12 March 1936, p. 10.
- *Sun* 25 April 1918, p. 9.
- *Otago Daily Times* 28 November 1939, p. 6.
- *Mount Ida Chronicle* 11 April 1891, p. 3.
- *Progress* 1 July 1910, p. 317; 1 September 1913, p. 675; 1 December 1914, p. 42.
- R Allen *Motif and Beauty – The New Zealand Arts and Crafts Architecture of Basil Hooper* Dunedin, 2000.
- <http://www.heritage.org.nz/the-list/details/2073>
- <http://www.heritage.org.nz/the-list/details/7492>
- <https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/3h34/hooper-basil-bramston>



The house in 1983. HNZPT.



Extent of setting, limited to house [marked by star] and garden setting, 12 Park Lane, Timaru.



Progress 1 July 1910, p. 317.