

DEVON TAVERN ASHBURTON

PRELIMINARY HERITAGE ASSESSMENT

ABSTRACT

A preliminary report regarding the heritage significance of the Devon Tavern, 16 Victoria Street Ashburton.

27 June 2016

PAST PRESENT FUTURE

Research and report prepared by



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Ian Butcher Architect is an architecture and design practice based in Timaru. Research for this report was carried out during June 2016 and has been a desk-top study only, as no physical examination of the building fabric or facilities was undertaken. Any assumptions and speculations contained herein would therefore need to be confirmed through further research and a building survey.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 COMMISSION

This preliminary Heritage Assessment is the result of a commission in June 2016 by Robert Reid, Manager Ashburton Licensing Trust. The report has been written and compiled by registered architect Ian Butcher with assistance provided by independent researcher Fliss Butcher. The report is intended to assist the Ashburton Trust, Heritage New Zealand and the Ashburton District Council regarding the future of the Devon Tavern, formerly known variously as the *Central Hotel*, *Grand Central Hotel*, *Devon*, and *Hotel Devon*.

1.2 OWNERSHIP AND STATUS

The Devon Tavern (hereinafter referred to as The Devon), is owned by the Ashburton Licensing Trust. The premises currently comprises a tavern occupying the ground floor with the first floor former accommodation facilities no longer in use.

The street address is 116 Victoria Street Ashburton. The land is in two sections.

Ashburton District Council details:

1

Sec 712 TOWN OF ASHBURTON

Property Number 10446

Land ID 16271

Land area 0.1012 ha

2

Sec 713 TOWN OF ASHBURTON

Property Number 10446

Land ID 16272

Land area 0.1012 ha

The property is not registered in New Zealand Heritage List/Rārangi Kōrero, nor is it listed in the Ashburton District Plan: *Schedule of Heritage Buildings*.

1.3 RESEARCH APPROACH

The research in this report is a preliminary assessment of **heritage value** and **heritage significance** as guided by the *ICOMOS New Zealand Charter for the Conservation of Places of Cultural Heritage Value, 2010* and the *Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Act 2014*.

1.4 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Acknowledgment is made to the following for their assistance:

- Staff at Ashburton Museum for photographs and plans.
- Dave Margetts, Heritage Advisor Architecture & Conservation, Heritage New Zealand, Christchurch.



Aerial photograph 2016, Ashburton District Council.

2.0 HISTORY

2.1 ASHBURTON

Ashburton is named after Lord Ashburton, who was one of the members of the Canterbury Association which purchased a large tract of land in the South Island between the Waipara and the Ashburton rivers from the New Zealand Land Company¹. The borough of Ashburton was incorporated on 30th July 1878. Before that time the town's affairs were managed by the Ashburton Road Board. The borough's boundaries enclosed an area of approximately 680 acres. There were about 500 buildings in the borough, which contained property an annual rateable value of £22,627. The Burgess Roll² contained the names of 586 ratepayers. A loan of £7,500 was raised to carry out works and improvements within the borough³.

2.2 CENTRAL HOTEL – BEFORE 1900

The Central Hotel opened its doors for business by James Baldwin on 20th March 1879. By 1890 there were six hotels in Ashburton with The Central Hotel being one of the largest and better known - as discussed by a visitor writing for *The Tablet* in 1890...

“Visitors will find Mr. Kelly's Central Hotel, on the Wakanui Road, and about 300 yards from the Railway Station, an excellent place, and Mr. and Mrs. Kelly a courteous and attentive host and hostess” (*Tablet*, 1890).

Although we could not determine who the architect and builders were of the original Central Hotel, we speculate that that Baker Bros who designed and constructed buildings⁴ could have been involved as they were located in Wakanui Road and were actively building in Ashburton at the time. More detailed research which is beyond the scope of this report would be needed to confirm this.

2.3 TEMPERANCE

With increased economic development in the area settlers soon arrived. Many fought the loneliness and pioneering way of life by seeking solace in drinking - often to excess. The negative effects of this caused much public concern and gave rise to the Temperance Movement which became one of the most divisive social issues of the late 19th and early 20th century in New

¹ (Cyclopedia, 1903).

² Burgess Rolls were compiled to record names of adults who owned or occupied rateable property in accordance with the Municipal Corporations Act 1867.

³ (Cyclopedia, 1903).

⁴ “...established in 1876, by Messrs. John W. Baker, Charles W. Baker, and Benjamin Baker” (*Cyclopedia*, 1903),

Zealand, with Ashburton being no exception. Social reformers argued that alcohol was the cause of poverty, ill health, neglect and abuse of families, immorality, and social and economic instability. They urged individuals to 'sign the pledge' to abstain from drink, and pressured Parliament to impose restrictions – or even a total prohibition – on the sale of alcohol⁵.

Temperance faced stiff opposition and not surprisingly, the liquor industry fought hard to protect its business. With lobbying from both sides parliament decided New Zealanders were to be given the opportunity to close the pub doors in their own electoral districts through local licensing polls held between 1894 and 1914, and over the whole country via national referendums from 1911 to 1987.

Ashburton majority voted 'No-License' in 1902 and current licenses were quickly rescinded forcing the holders – publicans - to change the way they did business. Thus the Central Hotel became known as a private hotel.

2.4 CENTRAL HOTEL – AFTER 1900

Shortly after licensing was established The Central was described as...

“large and commodious hotel situated within two minutes' walk of the railway station and post office, and fronts the Wakanui Road. The house contains twenty bedrooms (exclusive of what are used by the family), a dining-room, five sitting-rooms, a commercial room, card rooms, and a billiard-room fitted up with one of Alcock's tables. Under the able management of Mr. Dardis, the “Central” has become a popular resort. A first-class table is kept, and the household arrangements are under the supervision of Miss Dardis. On account of its convenient situation and excellent appointments, the house is specially adapted for theatrical companies, tourists, and the travelling public, and guests receive every attention and consideration at the hands of the proprietor. The best wines are kept in stock, and Ward's special beer is on draught. There is good stabling for the horses of country visitors”⁶

As they were serving beer and wine the proprietor had clearly found an effective way to negotiate the Dry!

⁵ (www.nzhistory.net.nz, 2016).

⁶ (Cyclopedia, 1903).

Promoting the establishment to travelling theatre groups, sports teams and tourists enabled The Central to continue to operate as a private Hotel, and later as a boarding house instead of a public house until the end of the 1940's⁷.

In 1949, after the liquor licensing laws changed and the Temperance Movement lost national momentum, the Ashburton community voted in local control of licensing and for those licenses to be managed by an organisation on behalf of the community. A Trust was set up, elections called for trustees and the Ashburton Licensing Trust formed.

2.5 THE DEVON

In 1950 the Licensing Trust purchased the Central Hotel which, judging from the photograph dated November 1950, was in very good condition. The Trust undertook alterations and engaged William Thomas, a local architect to assist. Thomas was employed by the Trust for many years to come on other alteration work at the hotel.

The 1950's alterations substantially expanded the hotel with construction of a new wing on the west side of the building that included accommodation facilities on the first floor and on the ground floor a new Kitchen, Lounge, Dining room, staff facilities and installation of fire escapes around the entire exterior of the upper floor.⁸ A bulk store was also added at the rear of the property.

The revamped hotel opened its doors for business in 1952, and, to usher in the significance of the event the Trust changed its name to The Devon. The Devon was the first hotel owned by the Ashburton Licensing Trust and was immediately popular, especially with the residents of the nearby Old Men's home⁹.

⁷ (Wright, 2015).

⁸ ALTERATIONS AND ADDITIONS TO HOTEL DEVON; Plans, William Thomas Registered Architect; 1950.

⁹ (Wright, 2015).

3.0 TIMELINE

Significant dates for the building:

- March 20, 1879, opened as Central Hotel, with the original owner and original licensee listed as James Baldwin (Wright, 2015).
- March, 1879, 713 Wakanui Road site of The Central Hotel, (Hanson).
- September, 1879, Billiard tables installed and leased to M Ryan (Hanson).
- March, 1881, owner/licensee Sam Brown (Wright, 2015).
- July, 1882, owner/licensee Sam Brown and John Beecher (Wright, 2015).
- June, 1883, owner/licensee, John Beecher. Beecher bankrupt October 1884 (Wright, 2015) (Hanson).
- November, 1884, applied for temporary license G Milner (Wright, 2015) (Hanson).
- July, 1885, owner/licensee, JW McRae (Wright, 2015) cited as JW McRea (Hanson).
- February, 1886, JW McCrea (sic) leaves Ashburton (Hanson).
- June, 1888, change of ownership, Wm Redmond "license granted as long as sufficient bedding provided to the satisfaction of the Inspector" (Wright, 2015).
- September, 1888, AJ Kelly took over (Hanson).
- June, 1889, owner/licensee, AJ Kelly (Wright, 2015) .
- April, 1898, T Connolly took over (Hanson).
- April, 1899, owner/licensee T Connolly (Wright, 2015).
- April, 1901 – 1903, owner/licensee, Henry Dardis (Wright, 2015).
- 1902, No License Vote, (Wright, 2015).
- 1903, William H. Dardis, proprietor. July, 1903, Dardis has a clearing sale (Wright, 2015).
- March, 1907, clearing sale, listed under the name of new building owner J Chalmers (Wright, 2015).

T I M E L I N E

- 1908, George Stoddart, proprietor (Hanson). The Central was run as a private hotel for many years (Wright, 2015).
- 1950, February, discussions begin with Central Hotel solicitors regarding purchase of the building by newly formed Ashburton Licensing Trust. (Wright, 2015) .
- 1950, Ashburton Architect William (Bill) Thomas begins a busy few years of association with Trust (Wright, 2015) and produces plans for alterations and additions to The Devon Hotel (Ashburton Museum Collection, 2016).
- June–August 1950, new owner/licensee Ashburton Licensing Trust, name changed to The Devon Hotel as a way to maintain the links Ashburton has to county Devon, England, and to acknowledge Lord Ashburton in the founding settlement of the district (Wright, 2015).
- November 6, 1952. The Devon Hotel official opening day (Wright, 2015), (photo Ashburton Museum) .

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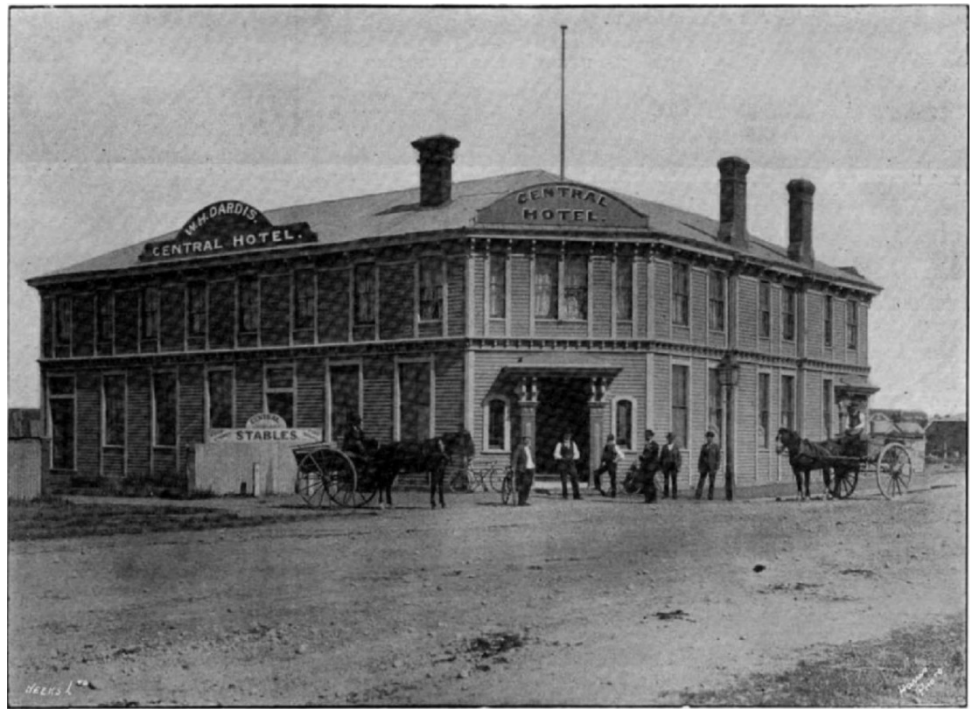
4.0 PHOTOGRAPHS, PLANS, DESCRIPTION

4.1 PHOTOGRAPHS



View of the building from the corner of Victoria St and Wills St.

Photo: June 2016 above (Ian Butcher) and 1879 below (Victoria University)



CENTRAL HOTEL, ASHBURTON.



View of the building from Victoria St.

Photo: June 2016 above (Ian Butcher) and circa 1908 below (Collection, 2016)





View of the building from Victoria St.

Photo: June 2016 above and circa 1970 below



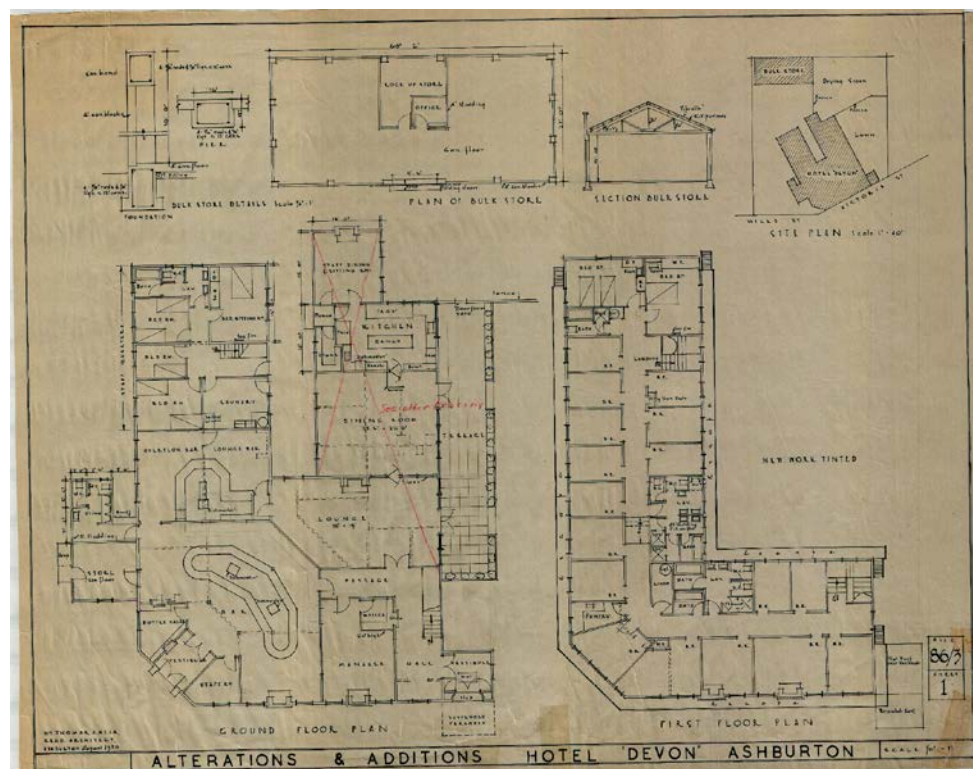
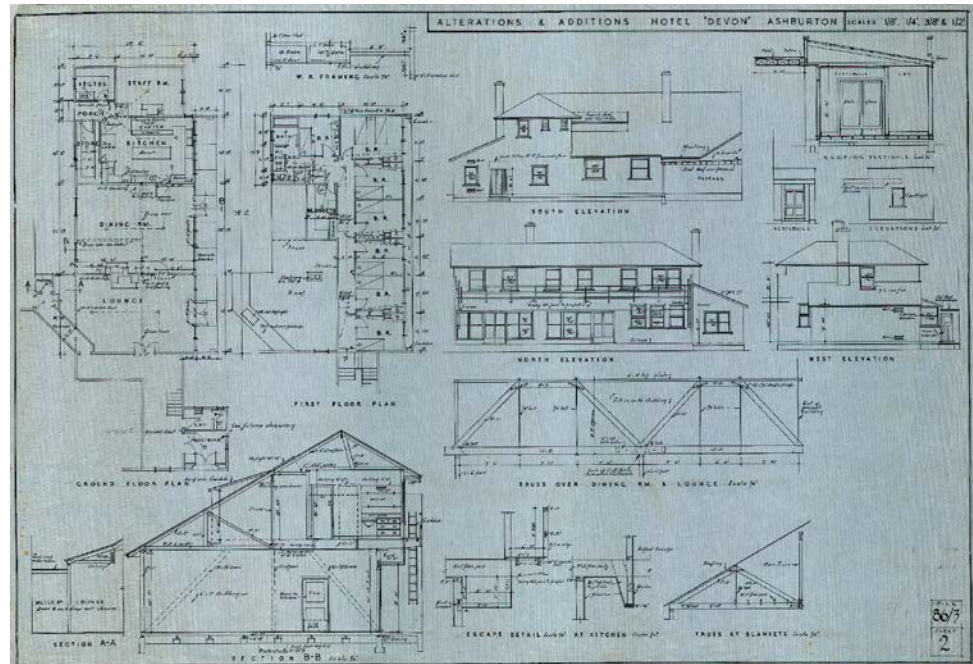


View of the building from the street corner.

Photo: June 2016 above (AT web site) and 1950 below (Collection, 2016)



4.2 PLANS



Drawings of proposed alterations to the building - 1950.
William Thomas, Registered Architect. (Ashburton Museum Collection, 2016)

4.3 DESCRIPTION OF THE BUILDING

1879. The hotel was originally built with ornate timber decoration around the entrances off Victoria Street and the corner, and eaves brackets, corbels to the entry roofs with leadlight windows each side of the corner entrance. The chimney tops had large corbelled brick tops and chimney pots typical of the Victorian era.

Although we cannot see original colours of the building from black and white photographs, we can see dark/light contrasts. The exterior timbers were neither dark nor light, however the timber facings were lighter than the wall colour and the window colour was darker than adjoining facings and the weatherboards.

Of particular interest in the 1879 photograph is the arrangement of weatherboards and the timber facings each side of windows, doors and at corners, and the frieze board and bracket detail at the eave and first floor levels. The facings run the full height of the wall effectively dividing the wall elevation vertically into panels of windows and weatherboards between the frieze boards. It is likely this was done as an architectural device to enable discreet jointing of the weatherboards behind the facings because weatherboard lengths in the 1870's would have been restricted according to log length, method of sawing, and profiling technology.

1950. At the time of purchase by the Licensing Trust, all the exterior timberwork appears to have been painted white or off white, that being a fashionable treatment of weatherboard buildings at the time. Judging from the photograph taken in November 1950, the exterior appears to have been in very good condition. The entrance doors were heavily paneled in the 1950 photograph and the curved top signage parapet was also intact. Chimneys have been reduced in height down to the lowest brick band and the Victorian era corbelled brick top removed.

The drawings of the alterations show the new work finished in plaster.¹⁰ Many timber buildings in New Zealand were plastered over and stripped of ornamentation during the 1950's and 1960's. This stripping back was likely inspired by the international modernist movement, it being ideologically dismissive of all decoration as unnecessary and which promoted only the rational and pure functionality of buildings as important. We speculate that the decision to plaster over the existing building was likely taken in an effort to present a unified and 'modern' appearance to the newly modified building

¹⁰ ALTERATIONS AND ADDITIONS TO HOTEL DEVON; William Thomas Registered Architect; 1950.

We were unable to find any other specific reference to this work in our preliminary study, and although being a significant occurrence in the life of the building, it is one that has had a dramatic and negative effect on its appearance.

2016. On a recent visit there appears to have been little change from its 1950's configuration. The facilities are old, the first floor accommodation is no longer in use and building looks drab. We did not undertake an inspection of the interiors beyond the public bar which, although of 1970's design, seemed to be enjoyed by the 15 patrons we encountered on our mid-week, afternoon visit.



View of the building from the street corner.

Photo: circa 1960 (Collection, 2016)

5.0 SIGNIFICANCE

5.1 STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE.

Because the property predates 1900 it is an historic place and an Archaeological Site¹¹ it is subject to the provisions of the *Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Act 2014*, the purpose of which is to promote the identification, protection, preservation, and conservation of the historical and **cultural heritage** values of New Zealand¹².

Under the *ICOMOS New Zealand Charter 2010*, **Cultural heritage value/s** means possessing aesthetic, archaeological, architectural, commemorative, functional, historical, landscape, monumental, scientific, social, spiritual, symbolic, technological, traditional, or other tangible or intangible values, associated with human activity.

Under these terms The Devon has **significant heritage value**.

¹¹ **archaeological site** means, subject to section 42(3),—

- (a) any place in New Zealand, including any building or structure (or part of a building or structure), that—
 - (i) was associated with human activity that occurred before 1900 or is the site of the wreck of any vessel where the wreck occurred before 1900; and
 - (ii) provides or may provide, through investigation by archaeological methods, evidence relating to the history of New Zealand; and
- (b) includes a site for which a declaration is made under section 43(1)

¹² *ibid*

7.0 FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

7.1 CURRENT STATUS

The building is not registered with Heritage NZ, nor is it listed in the Ashburton District Plan *Schedule of Heritage Buildings* however as an historic place under the *Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Act 2014*, any proposed changes to it are subject to an Archaeological Authority as follows:

- (1) Unless an authority is granted under section 48, 56(1)(b), or 62 in respect of an archaeological site, no person may modify or destroy, or cause to be modified or destroyed, the whole or any part of that site if that person knows, or ought reasonably to have suspected, that the site is an archaeological site.
- (2) Subsection (1) applies whether or not an archaeological site is a recorded archaeological site or is entered on—
 - (a) the New Zealand Heritage List/Rārangi Kōrero under subpart 1 of Part 4; or
 - (b) the Landmarks list made under subpart 2 of Part 4.
- (3) Despite subsection (1), an authority is not required to permit work on a building that is an archaeological site unless the work will result in the demolition of the whole of the building.

7.2 CHANGES

If demolition is the preference of the Ashburton Trust, an **archaeological authority** will be required. To accompany an application for an archaeological authority the Trust will need to demonstrate that alternatives to demolition have been thoroughly explored.

During the course of this investigation, the authors have identified alternative development possibilities, however, in-depth consideration and reporting of these alternatives is beyond the scope of this report.

