

In the Environment Court  
Christchurch Registry  
I mua i te Kooti Taiao o Aotearoa

Under the Resource Management Act 1991  
In the matter of an application under section 85 and clause 21 of the First  
Schedule of that Act

Between **Redmond Retail Limited**  
**ENV-2018-CHC-198**  
Applicant

And **Ashburton District Council**  
Respondent

And **Nigel Gilkison**  
Interested Party

And **Michael Hanrahan**  
Interested Party

And **Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga**  
Interested Party

And **Julie Luxton/Historic Places Mid-Canterbury**  
Interested Party

And **Maxine Watson**  
Interested Party

Re application to de-list heritage building at 229-241 West Street Ashburton, known as Cates Grain Store, from Appendix 12.1 of the Ashburton District Plan.

### **EXPERIENCE**

My interest in this building is as a historian interested in the social history of the Ashburton District and as a former farmer, familiar with the grain industry.

I was founder and for a number of years the chairman of the Ashburton Branch Committee of the then NZ Historic Places Trust as well as having an association with the Ashburton Historical Society for almost 50 years, including a term as president, before becoming director of the Ashburton Museum for nine years.

It was thanks to the efforts of these organisations that this building, and a number of others, were listed in the heritage schedules of the first Ashburton District Plan and have remained in subsequent District Plans.

I was also a farmer in the Ashburton District for 24 years and have a knowledge of the arable industry and its history in the district.

### **THE BUILDING**

My interest concerns only the original front portion of the building. Newer accretions could be removed giving saleable sections that could assist with restoration. I realise there is a view that this land may have little value because it may be "landlocked". However, the two sections to the north are owned by the District Council, and with the library to be demolished in the near future it should be possible to create an access from Havelock Street in a similar manner to the nearby Ruralco access.

I have not examined possible future uses, but one suggestion is that in the hands of a willing owner or charitable trust it could make a year-round home for the farmers market or craft market that currently close for the winter. This would be similar to markets that operate in Oamaru's heritage area.

### **HERITAGE LISTINGS**

I find it a somewhat cynical attitude that the present owners purchased the building knowing that it had a heritage listing and what that meant, but are now attempting to have that listing removed so demolition can occur. In my mind it raises doubts about the use and effectiveness of the whole listing mechanism when it can potentially be so easily circumvented.

### **SOCIAL HISTORY - THE FRIEDLANDER FAMILY**

This building is the last tangible reminder in Ashburton of the Friedlander family, a philanthropic family that influenced the early development Ashburton over many years and in many ways, but also a family that was shamefully treated by the community on religious and racial grounds during World War One, to the point where they felt they had to leave Ashburton. Towards the end of my time as director of the Ashburton Museum in 2016 I

became aware the Friedlander family today still feels this deeply. I was visited two elderly men, descendants of the Friedlander family, who introduced themselves and then said "of course you wouldn't have anything about our family in your display". I was able to direct them to displays about the family's business activities and civic involvement.

Preserving this building could do a little something 100 years later to remedy this injustice. The Friedlander head office building in Burnett Street was demolished in recent years, making this building the last link with the family. I am not suggesting this is a responsibility of the current property owners but I feel it is a District Council responsibility; one that has been met through the current heritage listing.

### **SOCIAL HISTORY - ARABLE INDUSTRY**

Canterbury was once the main area in New Zealand for the growing of cereal grains. The centre of this was Ashburton, to the point where in 1950 a book was published called *"Ashburton, the Granary of New Zealand"*.

The grain harvesting technology of the 19th Century and much of the 20th Century required the use of sacks instead of bulk storage. These in turn required large buildings to store the grain, unlike the silos that came into use from the 1970s. This building is a rare example of a piece of that older harvesting technology, something that makes its preservation important. This diminishing of the remnants of an industry once vitally important to Canterbury has continued across the whole province, with mills in Timaru and Christchurch demolished or converted to other uses. Ashburton has lost all three of its major flour mills. This means this building is one of the more significant remnants of a once highly significant industry that remains in wider Canterbury, something recognised by its listing.

### **SOCIAL HISTORY - BUILDERS**

The involvement of Peter Gourdie in the construction of this building, particularly with its curved laminated roof trusses, is significant. Gourdie was an early Ashburton builder who was behind the construction of many of Ashburton's earlier significant buildings such as the original Tuarangi Home. His work was, for the time, innovative, as evidenced by the type of construction.

### **STRUCTURAL MATTERS**

From an engineering point of view this building is very significant. There were once three of these large buildings with curved roofs supported by laminated timber trusses in this part of West Street alone, as well as others in different parts of the town, such as Cooksons Livery Stables (Radiant Hall) and Bullock's Arcade.

Now there are only two left, this one and Bullock's Arcade between Burnett and Tancred Streets. Both are in the same ownership, and I believe there has been an indication from the owners that the Arcade will be demolished at some time. It was the same owners who demolished Cooksons Livery Stable, later known as the Radiant Hall.

In the 1970s DSIR engineers visited Ashburton and examined the curved laminated trusses that support the Arcade roof and the roof of this building and declared them to be the best example of 19<sup>th</sup> Century structural engineering in Ashburton.

## **CONCLUSION**

From a historical point of view I believe the current heritage listing should remain on this building, providing a tangible reminder of an industry that was once vital to the District, a reminder of industrial processes of the past and a reminder of a family that did much for the Ashburton District during its formation years.

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