

Longbeach Estate Item D

Sod Cottage



Location

Address:	1034 Lower Beach Road, Ashburton
Co-ordinates:	Northing 5678738 , Easting 2404496
Legal Description:	Lot 2 DP 39648 (CT CB18K/390), Canterbury Land District
Owner:	Longbeach Estate Limited

Purpose

Current Use:	Vacant
Original/Past Uses:	Dwelling; School

Heritage Significance and Category

Heritage Significance:	Physical; Historic		
Heritage NZ:	Historic Place Category 2	List # 1759	Date Listed: 26 November 1981
Ashburton DC:	Category A		

Site Assessment

Assessed by:	Arlene Baird, Davie Lovell-Smith Ltd.
Date Assessed:	9 December 2014

Detail	
Description:	<p>This cottage is built of sod blocks (blocks cut from an upper layer of grassland). Houses of this type were constructed quickly and easily by early settlers in areas where timber and stone were scarce or inaccessible.</p> <p>It is a small rectangular building with one single internal space. The northern elevation has one door opening holding a timber door, and one window opening with two 6-pane fixed windows. The other three elevations have no window or door openings. Internally there is a relatively large fireplace with chimney on the western wall of the building.</p> <p>This is a slightly unusual sod structure as it has double block walls with a cavity in between the blocks. This would have provided additional insulation. The wall blocks are large and cut in a rhomboid shape rather than square as this would have provided slightly more strength and stability. The chimney blocks are cut squarely and have not lasted as well as the walls. The original roof was thatch – it is not evident what type, reed, flax, cabbage tree or tussock. This was removed at some point and replaced with hipped corrugated iron.</p> <p>There are large areas of the sod which are cracked and weathered. The northern and western elevations still retain plaster on the exterior, however none remains on the southern elevation. It is evident, particularly on that southern elevation, where repair works have been undertaken on the sod.</p>
History:	<p>Sod Cottage</p> <p>This Sod Cottage is located just to the north west of the current homestead. It is believed to have been the first building erected on the Longbeach Estate – the exact date of construction is not known, but it is thought to be mid to late 1860s.</p> <p>The cottage was built as a Stockman's quarters – this was at a time when the Griggs were still living in Christchurch whilst work was being undertaken to drain the swamp and establish farmland and buildings. A number of small stockman's cottages were dotted around the Estate, this being the only one to have survived. It is unknown if these were all constructed of sod, but it is highly likely.</p> <p>In later years, when the building was no longer required for accommodation, it was used as a school for the children of the Estate workers. Today it is a vacant remnant and sits as an excellent historical example of an early sod cottage in what was a remote area.</p> <p>Longbeach Estate</p> <p>John Grigg was born at Bodbrane Farm in Cornwall in 1828 and emigrated to New Zealand in 1854. He brought with him his siblings and step-siblings who he was responsible for following the death of his parents. At first John lived in Auckland but by his mid-30s he was tired of the climate and concerned about the frictions between the Maori tribes. So he moved south with his wife Martha, their children (of which there were eventually 6) and his siblings.</p> <p>The land was described as a Valueless Bog on the Lands Office Map in 1864. This was to become Longbeach and total 32,000 acres stretching from the Ashburton River in the North to the Hinds River in the South, and from the Pacific Ocean on the East to the present North/South Railway in the West.</p>

Detail	
	<p>The Grigg family, including John's sisters, step-sisters and brother, lived in Christchurch for several years while work began on draining the swamp and establishing dwellings. He purchased the Chertsey Accommodation House and transported it by bullock wagon through the Ashburton River to the farm. The family arrived in a convoy of horses and wagons across the swamp in 1872.</p> <p>Crops were established and before long the merino flock numbered 10,000. The Estate became a self-supporting Community with its own Post Office, School, General Store, Flourmill, Brickworks, Church, Smithy, Bakery, Cookhouse as well as Stables, Cowsheds, Pig Sties and Woolshed.</p> <p>The Garden was first established in 1864 with trees planted as shelterbelts against the North West winds. Longbeach garden has prospered over the years as each generation of the Grigg family has continued with plantings and maintenance. Today there is 16 acres of sweeping lawns and garden.</p> <p>In 1882 the heavily mortgaged Longbeach was put up for sale, due to the amicable end of the agreement between Thomas and John. John purchased back 16,000 hectares lying between Boundary Road and the Hinds River and 13,000 sheep. With the frozen export trade firmly in his sights, he grew that number to 37,000 in 12 years. Lamb fattening became a huge enterprise. John was also interested in dairying and his son JCN Grigg, was sent to source the best dairy cattle he could find. He settled on Dutch Friesian cattle, descendants of which are still important in local dairy herds today.</p> <p>Longbeach has remained in the same family, passing from John Grigg, to J.C.N. Grigg, to his son J. H. Grigg, who in turn passed it on to his daughter and son in law Virginia and David Thomas, and today it is farmed by their son Bill Thomas, his wife Penny and their four children. Bill was just 23 when he took over running Longbeach from his mother Virginia and her husband David Thomas in 1985.</p> <p>Today the Estate comprises of a successful farm plus the Chapel and Cookshop which are hired out for weddings and functions.</p>
Notable Features:	Sod construction; Small window and door openings; fireplace and chimney; setting.
Condition:	The sod cottage is in a reasonable state of repair, considering its age and construction. The sod blocks are in a relatively good condition, with patches of repair work having been done in the past. Much of the clay plaster has cracked or eroded away and none remains on the rear (south) of the building, leaving the blocks exposed. The windows and door, as well as their frames, are still in place albeit considerably weathered and worn. The original thatched roof has been replaced with a corrugated iron roof which is in good condition and water tight.
Setting:	The sod cottage is located a short distance to the north west of the homestead and is hidden in a quiet corner of the garden, screened by mature trees and a hedge. The setting is of high importance as this is thought to have been the first building constructed on Longbeach and was built in the heart of the Estate. It is also important due to its relationship with the homestead and the other buildings on the Estate.





