

[About the List](#)

[Nominate a Historic Place](#)

[Notified Proposals and Reviews](#)

[Recent List entries and reviews](#)

[Lost Heritage](#)

[Search help](#)

[Landmarks](#)

Navigation

Wahi Ruru

50 Heberden Avenue, Sumner, Christchurch



Wahi Ruru.
Copyright: NZ Historic Places Trust. Date: 1/01/2005.

List Entry Information

List Entry Status

Listed

List Number

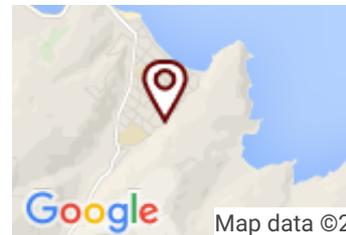
3125

List Entry Type

Historic Place Category 2

Date Entered

24th June 2005



Location

Extent of List Entry

The registration includes the house, its fittings and fixtures, and the land on CT CB46C/229

City/District Council

Christchurch City

Region

Canterbury Region

Legal description

Lot 4 DP 69195, Sec 1 SO Plan 20076, Sec 1 SO Plan 20077
(CT CB46C/229)

Summary

Dr Burrell Parkerson, a surgeon formerly of East Dereham, Norfolk, and his large family arrived in Canterbury aboard the 'Isabella Hercus' in March 1851. On the 2nd of June that year, Parkerson purchased from the Canterbury Association the 100 acres of Rural Section 144 at Sumner, and four town sections totalling 1 acre in Christchurch. During spring 1851 a dwelling was built on the farm at Sumner. There is some suggestion that this initial residence was a wooden cottage, but by 1853 it had been either supplemented or supplanted by a two-storey stone cottage. This cottage apparently housed only Parkerson's three eldest sons, as Parkerson, his wife and their seven other children chose to remain principally in Christchurch, residing from 1853 to 1857 in a house on Oxford Tce.

The Parkerson family actively farmed their Sumner property only until 1855, when Richard Knowles Parkerson leased it to John Townsend Parkinson of Gollan's Bay for ten years at £74/3/- per annum. In March 1862, 50 more acres at Sumner was purchased from the Crown. In 1863 the farm was subdivided and sections were offered for sale, but there was little interest. Burrell Parkerson was appointed Co-Superintendent at Christchurch Hospital in 1862, but resigned in 1864, sold his Christchurch and Sumner properties, and took up pastoral runs with his sons in the MacKenzie Country. The Parkersons were successful in this enterprise, and at one time had runs in North Otago and Canterbury totalling 350, 000 acres.

The Parkersons sold the whole of their by then 150 acre Sumner farm to land speculator and solicitor Henry Bell Johnstone and barrister Joshua Strange Williams for £1, 800 in February 1864. Johnstone and Williams sold the first section in their 'Johnstoneville' subdivision in April 1866.

On 19th May 1873 the house and its residual estate of 10.5 acres was sold for £782 to Mrs Frances Frew, a widow. Frew later married Edward William Roper, gentleman, and after her death in 1891, Roper inherited the property. Roper sold out to John Alexander Inglis, draper of Linwood in 1901.

It was around this time that a substantial nine roomed villa extension was added to the original house, wrapping around the south and east sides. The stone cottage portion subsequently became servant's quarters. The enlarged dwelling was lit by a methane gas plant situated in a shed on the south side of the house. This utilized animal droppings from the adjoining Scarborough Farm.

In 1913 Inglis decided to further subdivide his property. On 5th March that year estate agent W. E. Simes put 37 town sections of 22 perches each, and the homestead - by then known as Wahi Ruru (Place of the Morepork) - on a 6½ acre block, up for auction. Although Sumner was described in the auction notice in glowing terms as the 'most popular watering place in the Dominion', the house itself appears to have been passed in, and was purchased by Simes himself in May 1915.

Simes sold the house with 1¾ acres to Albert Ernest Langdale-Hunt of West Melton and Walter John Langdale of Sumner in June 1920. Albert purchased Walter's share in 1932. During this period a market garden was established, and large glasshouses were built.

The title passed to Wilfred Melton Langdale-Hunt in October 1945, who sold the property the following December to Royston Stuart Marker. Marker on-sold to Eric John Noel Rice, a schoolteacher, in 1947. In December 1962 Rice sold Wahi Ruru to Evelyn Maud Johnston, wife of Desmond Robert Merrell Johnston, farmer of Governor's Bay. Mrs Johnston further subdivided the property in 1970, leaving the house on a 1 acre 20 perches plot. In 1974 Mrs Johnston offered to leave the house to the Historic Places Trust, but after some prevarication the Trust effectively declined the offer. Honorary Trust Field Officer Cyril Loach carried out research on the property at this time, dispelling the popular belief that the house had been built by Edward Jerningham Wakefield. This misapprehension had been fostered by former Listener editor Monty Holcroft in his Christchurch Sketchbook of 1968. After Mrs Johnston's death in 1994, the property was sold to present owners, Dr Patrick and Mrs Sally Mulhern.

At the time the Mulherns took possession of Wahi Ruru, the house was in a state of serious disrepair. City heritage organizations

were anxious to see the dwelling preserved, and the Historic Places Trust commissioned an appraisal of the building's condition from heritage consultant Alexandra Teague at this time. Between 1994 and 1997 the Mulherns carried out a major programme of restoration, alteration, and addition with the aid of architect Malcolm McClurg, and a \$4,000 grant from the Christchurch City Council. In late 1994 the lean-to scullery and former gas production shed were removed, and a new kitchen was installed in what had been a bedroom. The old kitchen became the laundry. During 1996 a double garage and utility room were added to the south elevation.

The Mulherns had the property subdivided into four sections in 1995, retaining three. Wahi Ruru was offered for sale in June 2001 for \$750,000, but was not in the event sold. In August 2003, the Mulherns sought consent for a three title subdivision. The house remains on a 2064 square metre section.

Assessment criteria

Historical Significance or Value

Historical significance for its associations with early Canterbury doctor Burrell Parkerson and his family, and because it is amongst the oldest houses remaining in Christchurch.

Architectural significance as an unusual design and mode of construction; possibly an example of the translation to New Zealand of a vernacular British house type.

Social significance in the way it illustrates the desire of many European early settlers to recreate aspects of the environment at 'Home'; and the manner in which it demonstrates that these settlers were not a homogeneous group, but from widely differing social, economic and regional backgrounds - which in the case of the Parkerson family may have impacted on the particularly unusual design of their dwelling.

(a) reflects the fact that new settlers came from diverse regional backgrounds that could impact on the way they responded to their new environment - in this case building a house atypical of the standard early colonial dwelling. It also signals, in the English appearance of the cottage, the desire of European immigrants to re-create as much as possible, elements of the British built (and natural) environments.

(e) is valued by the community such that the Historic Places Trust and the Christchurch City Council actively worked during the 1990s to encourage the preservation of the house.

(g) the original cottage is of a design unique in New Zealand.

(i) it is amongst the oldest houses remaining in Christchurch.

Links

Current use

[Accommodation - House](#)

Former use

[Accommodation - House](#)

Construction Professionals

McClurg, Malcolm

No biography is currently available for this construction professional

