

City of Gothic Proportions

Early Maori, the Waitaha, lived and gathered food here in the wetlands more than 700 years ago. They were followed in the 1500s by Ngati Mamoe, then Ngai Tahu in the 1700s. The Maori name for Christchurch, O-Tautahi, means the place of Tautahi. It is derived from the name of a Ngai Tahu chief, Tautahi, who had a settlement on the banks of the Otakaro (Avon River) in the vicinity of the Avon loop.

Although Captain James Cook sighted Banks 'Island' in February 1770 it was not until 1815 that the first European landed in Canterbury from a sealing ship, the *Governor Bligh*.

In 1840, the same year Ngai Tahu became a Treaty partner of the British Crown, the first European settlers on the Canterbury Plains landed in Lyttelton but soon abandoned attempts to establish a farm. They were followed in 1843 by William and John Deans who successfully started farming in the Riccarton area which they named after their home parish in Scotland.

Four years later John Robert Godley and Edward Gibbon Wakefield were instrumental in the establishment of the Canterbury Association whose plan was to found a church of England colony that looked "just like home". Christchurch was named after Godley's former Oxford College, Christ Church.

The area of land surveyed by Captain Joseph Thomas and his assistant Edward Jollie for the city of Christchurch remains in the same plan form today; a grid pattern of streets around a central square with diagonal streets to the north and south.

Canterbury Association ships carrying the first Canterbury pilgrims arrived in December 1850; the *Charlotte Jane* and the *Randolph* on 16 December 1850, *Sir George Seymour* the following day, and the *Cressy* on 27 December.

Despite the hardships of colonisation the city of Christchurch quickly took shape on the Canterbury Plains. Schools, parishes and businesses were soon established. By 31 July 1856 Christchurch had become a City by Royal Charter, making it the oldest city in New Zealand.

The city's leading early architect, Benjamin Woolfield Mountfort, left an enduring legacy with his Gothic Revival inspired buildings. After just 60 years of organised settlement Christchurch was a thriving, confident city with distinctive buildings that reflected the great variety of architectural tastes favoured in late Victorian and Edwardian times.

We invite you to explore a small sample of the city's sites and architecture. Most buildings can only be viewed from the street but a number of public buildings and churches are open to the public. Enjoy their diverse architecture and history.

Cover

Christ Church Cathedral

The soaring Cathedral spire has been an instantly recognisable symbol of Christchurch for more than 120 years. It has been through some shaky times though, with earthquakes damaging it in 1881, 1888 and 1901! For information about the Cathedral see No. 18.



Cranmer Courts

Cranmer Square; architect: S.C. Farr; built: 1876

The Normal School provided primary education and was Christchurch's first teachers' training college. Its adaptive reuse was one of Christchurch's early conservation success stories. Saved from demolition in the 1980s, Gothic Revival facades were retained in a project that saw the rest of the large L-shaped building opened out to form apartments and a restaurant.



Christ's College Dining Hall

Rolleston Avenue; architect: Cecil Wood; built: 1928

Founded in 1850, Christ's College is housed in a magnificent precinct of buildings of different ages set around an open quadrangle. The oldest surviving building is the stone Big School, 1863. Prominent on the street frontage is the fine Memorial Dining Hall, designed by Cecil Wood, a twentieth century architect who continued the traditions of Gothic Revival stone architecture.



Cranmer Centre

Cranmer Square; architect: W.B. Armson; built: 1881

Christchurch Girls' High School was one of the first girls' schools to be established in New Zealand and remained on site until the 1980s. Gothic Revival in style and brick in construction, the earliest part of the building was added to substantially in 1907, 1913, 1938, 1958 and 1962. Now, as the Cranmer Centre, the building is owned as part of Christ's College.



Canterbury Museum

Rolleston Avenue; architect: B.W. Mountfort; built: 1870-77

Fine stonework, a prominent tower, large rose window and distinctive porch all contribute to the charm of a building that illustrates B.W. Mountfort's skill in adapting Gothic to secular requirements. Building of the Canterbury Museum, haunt of generations of young Cantabrians, began on the site in 1870. The familiar frontage was completed later that decade.



Arts Centre Clock Tower Block

Worcester Street; architect: B.W. Mountfort; built: 1876-79

The first permanent building of the University of Canterbury was the clocktower block. It is part of a complex of Halswell stone, Gothic Revival buildings which housed the university. Designed by various architects and built over nearly half a century, the buildings of what is now the Arts Centre include thriving studios, boutiques, shops, restaurants and workshops.



Nurses' Memorial Chapel

Riccarton Avenue; architect: J.G. Collins; built: 1927-28

The Chapel is this country's only memorial built specifically to commemorate New Zealand women killed in war. Originally part of the old hospital, it now stands in a garden setting. With its extensively timbered interior and fine stained glass it has long been a tranquil retreat for patients, relatives and staff. Four of the nine windows are by noted English glass artist Veronica Whall (1887 - 1967).



Antigua Street Boatsheds

Cambridge Terrace; architect: unknown; built: 1882

These are the only surviving commercial boatsheds of the five or six that once offered craft for hire for pleasure boating on the Avon River. Fibreglass canoes, paddle boats and punts have replaced the rowing boats of previous years, but the present generation still enjoys the leisurely pastime as much as those who appear in old photos of parties boating through the Botanic Gardens.



St Michael And All Angels

Oxford Terrace; architect: W.F. Crisp; built: 1872

One of New Zealand's finest examples of a Gothic Revival church built in timber, the present St Michael's - the 'mother church' of Anglicanism in Christchurch - replaced a simpler building on the same site. The church has fine interior detailing and stained glass. The free-standing belfry beside it was designed by B.W. Mountfort and built in 1861. The bell it houses came to Canterbury in 1850.



Bridge Of Remembrance

Cashel Street; architects: Gummer and Ford; built: 1924

Designed as a triumphal arch, the Bridge of Remembrance was constructed to commemorate those lost in WW1. It is on the site of the former Cashel Street bridge that troops from the King Edward Barracks (now demolished) had crossed on their way to the railway station to depart for active service. The bridge now commemorates the dead from all wars that Canterbury troops have fought in. Sculptural elements were carved by F.G. Gurnsey.



The Canterbury Club

Cambridge Terrace; architect: Frederick Strouts; built: 1872-73

Founded in 1872 as a social club for city men, partly in reaction to the pastoral domination of the older Christchurch Club, the Canterbury Club commissioned Frederick Strouts to design premises for its members in a domestic Italianate style. The gas lamp and hitching post on the footpath at the Club's front door are unusual features from the era when the Club was founded.



Library Chambers

Cambridge Terrace; architects: W.B. Armson/Collins & Harman; built: 1875/1893/1923

This cluster of buildings served as a public library until 1982 when it was converted to commercial uses. The original part of the building is a fine example of Venetian Gothic architecture. The site was an early Maori urupa or burial ground.



Our City O-Tautahi

Worcester Street; architect: S. Hurst Seager; built: 1887

The Queen Anne design of the Christchurch City Council's first permanent home was a marked departure from the prevailing Gothic Revival architecture of Christchurch at the time. The brick facades of the building are attractively decorated and varied. On the south facade are two terracotta figures, the work of Sir George Frampton who sculpted Kensington Gardens' Peter Pan. The building is now used for community exhibitions and events.



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Christchurch City Council

Find out more about the Christchurch City Council's role in heritage management by visiting www.ccc.govt.nz/christchurch/heritage/ or the Civic Offices, 163-173 Tuam Street, Christchurch. Tel: (03) 941 8999



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Provincial Council Buildings

Durham and Armagh Streets; architect: B.W. Mountfort; built: 1858-65

Masterpiece of Christchurch's most renowned early architect, the Provincial Council Buildings include an older timber portion with a stone paved corridor, and a magnificent stone Council Chamber with the finest Gothic Revival interior in New Zealand. These are the only surviving purpose-built Provincial Council buildings in the country.



14

Durham Street Methodist Church

Durham Street; architects: Crouch and Wilson; built: 1864

Though Wesleyans and Methodists were a small minority among Canterbury's early settlers, they gave Christchurch its first stone church. The Halswell stone, Gothic Revival church was designed by Crouch and Wilson of Melbourne, but their design was modified for economic reasons by a local architect, S.C. Farr. The buttressed south-east corner never did acquire its spire.



15

Victoria Clock Tower

cnr Victoria Street and Montreal Street; architect B W Mountfort

The clock and ironwork were brought from England in 1860 to adorn the Canterbury Provincial Council Buildings. Proving too heavy for the timber structure, the clock was stored until 1897 and erected on a stone base on the corner of High and Manchester Streets to celebrate Queen Victoria's Jubilee. By 1930 it had become a traffic hazard and was relocated to its current site.



16

Theatre Royal

Gloucester Street; architects: Luttrell Bros; built: 1907-08

One of the city's finest Edwardian buildings, the Theatre Royal was erected in 1907-1908 to replace the earlier theatre of the same name which still stands opposite. It had an uncertain future until it was purchased by a charitable foundation in 1980 to ensure the building would be retained for live performances. Its finely sculpted street facade is matched by a lavishly decorated auditorium.



17

New Regent Street

off Gloucester Street; architect: H. Francis Willis; built: 1932

In the early 1930s the massive Colosseum, used as a skating rink, theatre and factory, was demolished, and an entire street built where it stood. The Spanish Mission style New Regent Street is New Zealand's only example of a street built to a single architectural style. On the tram route, New Regent Street is known for its cafes and specialist shops.



18

Christ Church Cathedral

Cathedral Square; architect: G.G. Scott; completed: 1904

Conceived by the Canterbury Association in 1850, construction of Christ Church Cathedral did not begin until the 1860s. Although the nave was consecrated in 1881, the transepts and chancel were not completed until 1904. The Cathedral was designed by leading English architect of the day Sir George Gilbert Scott (1811-1878).



21

Former Government Building

Worcester Street; architect: J.C. Maddison; built: 1911

With its imposing Renaissance palazzo style the former Government Building has a powerful presence in the Square and Worcester Street. It was built to house government departments when the Post Office in the Square could not provide sufficient accommodation. No longer required as government offices, the building has been converted into apartments, shops and a restaurant.



22

The Press Building

Cathedral Square; architects: Collins & Harman; built: 1909

One of New Zealand's best examples of the Perpendicular Gothic style, this building is home to daily newspaper *The Press*, founded in 1861. It is distinguished by its strong vertical emphasis and subtle changes in the arrangement of windows on each floor. An elegant tower containing a pigeon loft emphasises the building's corner site.



25

Fisher's Building

Hereford Street; architect: W.B. Armonson; built: 1881

Its corner site and striking Venetian Gothic architecture make the Fisher's Building a landmark even among much larger, later buildings. It is important as a surviving example of last century's commercial architecture on a street which has been almost completely rebuilt in recent years. It takes its name from a local clergyman for whom it was built.



26

Shand's Emporium

Hereford Street; architect: unknown; built: c.1860

Shand's Emporium in Hereford Street is the last remaining Victorian timber commercial building in the central city. Originally a solicitor's office it is an excellent example of the timber colonial buildings that once occupied the streets of the city in the first decades of settlement in the mid nineteenth century.



19

Former Chief Post Office

Cathedral Square; architect: W.H. Clayton; built: 1879

The Italianate style of this building complements the Cathedral's Gothic Revival architecture. Used in later years solely by the Post Office, it was built originally to house all government offices. With its attractive tower and fine proportions, this is one of Christchurch's most admired buildings. It now includes Christchurch's visitor centre and offices.



20

The Regent Building

Cathedral Square; architects: Luttrell Bros; built: 1905

Originally the Royal Exchange Building, this striking Edwardian building with its ornate tower was converted to a movie theatre in 1930. The Regent's interior was rebuilt after a major fire in 1980. Its elaborate facades reflect the confidence of Edwardian Christchurch better than any other surviving city building.



23

Trinity Church

Worcester Street; architect: B.W. Mountfort; built: 1874

For the Trinity Congregational Church, B.W. Mountfort chose an Early English Gothic style to produce a church of intriguing design, perfectly suited to the congregation's requirements for an open preaching space. Now in private ownership, this striking stone church has been well conserved.



24

Christchurch Club

Latimer Square; architect: B.W. Mountfort; built: 1862

The haunt of early Canterbury runholders, including the English author Samuel Butler, the Christchurch Club was an important centre of social and political life in early Christchurch. The timber Italianate building has varied facades and is notable for the sophistication of its design while Christchurch was still little more than a village. Forms traditionally executed in stone are translated into timber.



27

Former AJ White's Department Store

(McKenzie and Willis) Tuam Street; architects: A.W. Simpson; built: 1878-79 England Bros; built 1910

Once home to one of New Zealand's earliest established furniture manufacturing and retailing firms, this pair of buildings contributes to the heritage precinct of older commercial architecture in the High Street area. The corner building was built with large windows and vertical lines. Its neighbour is a red brick Venetian Gothic building dating from the 1870s.



28

Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament

Barbadoes Street; architect: F.W. Petre; built: 1905

A building of noble proportions and dramatic impact, the city's basilican-style Roman Catholic Cathedral is one of New Zealand's finest neo-Renaissance churches. The building has an interior as powerful as its exterior and earned lavish praise from George Bernard Shaw when he visited Christchurch in 1934.

