

We have lived in the area for 72 years; I lived in the building for 9 months when I was 5 and Shirley and I have owned it for more than 40 years.

The building is incredibly special, not only in terms of architectural features, but also in the quality of the build.

Let's deal initially with the build. The builder we engaged to do the conversion initially trained as a joiner at Hardy and Thomson, a well-established joinery company in Christchurch. This gave us a fantastic finish as far as the build was concerned, but a project that was supposed to take 5 months to complete, actually took 9 months.

In terms of the original building, we do not know who the architect was, but the building was erected in 1875 as a gate house to Lansdowne for the then owner of Lansdowne, Edward Stafford, the youngest and longest serving premier of New Zealand. Stafford built what was to be the second Lansdowne homestead (the first one had burnt down) and the second one was demolished in 1960 to be replaced by the current house designed by Heathcote Helmore.

Having stated that we do not know the architect, we suspect Mountfort may have had a hand in it, as he was active at the time. Our reasoning for this is based on some features that were not current practice, and in fact did not come into use until 6 or 7 decades after this building was created. The most obvious are the windows. All of the original windows are side hung. This type of fixture did not come into common usage until after the first world war. Up until that time, windows were double hung, sash windows. Furthermore, the way the window frames are created using a picture frame detail, are there to create shadow lines to enhance the depth that they are set back into the wall. Also it is worth noting are the large Rimu mullens in the middle of the original windows and indeed the original panes of glass with their deformities as a result of age. So determined were we to create an exact replica of the original, we engaged Hardy and Thomson to make exact replicas to fit out the new addition.

The Weather Boards. When the original building was erected, there was no such thing as band saws, everything was milled by circular saw and this is evident in the saw marks in the original. To replicate this we located the only circular saw in the South Island which was based on the West Coast and had them run the weather boards in imperial measurements (NZ had long gone to metric) out of native white pine. This has created a building where it is incredibly hard to define what is new and what is original.

In the Lim. it describes the steel beam running parallel to the road and is the main beam holding up the flat / glass roof. It is hidden behind a wooden veneer. To show the lengths we went to in this build, we precambered the beam 25mm upwards so that when the load came on as we lowered the flat roof section into place, the beam would end up exactly level. We actually argued with our engineer about this as he maintained that it would not sag under load, however, as we lowered the roof, the beam became straight and has remained so ever since.

The roof is butynol and it was one of the first buildings to use this material. Consequently, it is the original product, not some generic replacement. It was incredibly well laid. Firstly, it was put in in the summer when the wood below it was super dry. Secondly it is flashed up under the corrugated iron by about 150mm and also about 100 mm up under the glass roof. Thirdly the roof is a regular rectangle and as such has only a centre join. Fourthly, when we installed this,

butynol only came in black. We were concerned about the potential heat build-up, so we immediately painted the roof white to reflect the sun. THERE IS NO WAY WE WOULD EVER CONSIDER REPLACING THIS ROOF. A replacement would only be a shadow of the original.

The building was insulated as we restored / built on to the building. It is not insulated under the floor, but the space under the floor is very generous and this could be retrofitted if desired.

The fire inside the front door is gas fired and electrically started. It was positioned where it is to create ambience for customers arriving at the restaurant. We envisage that it could either be turned into a both sides fire or turned to face into the main part of the room or indeed removed and placed somewhere else in the room.

I have only dealt with a sample of the features of this building, a building that won the premier award at the Christchurch City Council Civic Awards for restoration of historic buildings.