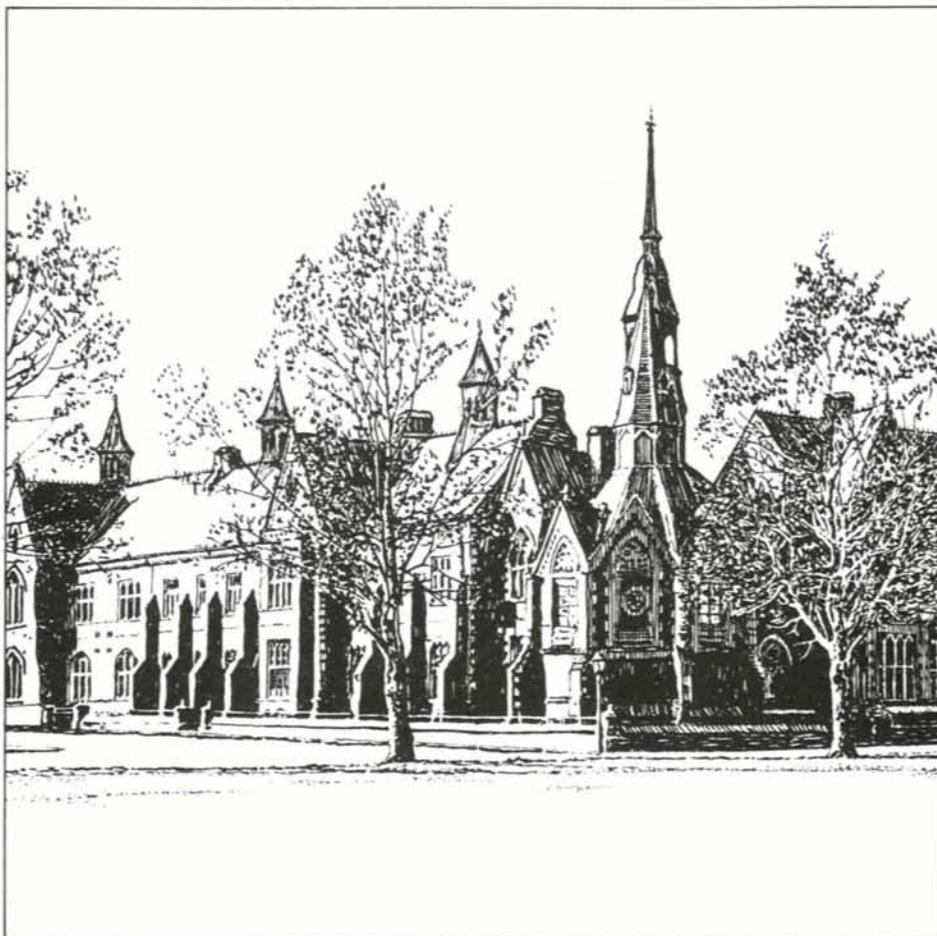
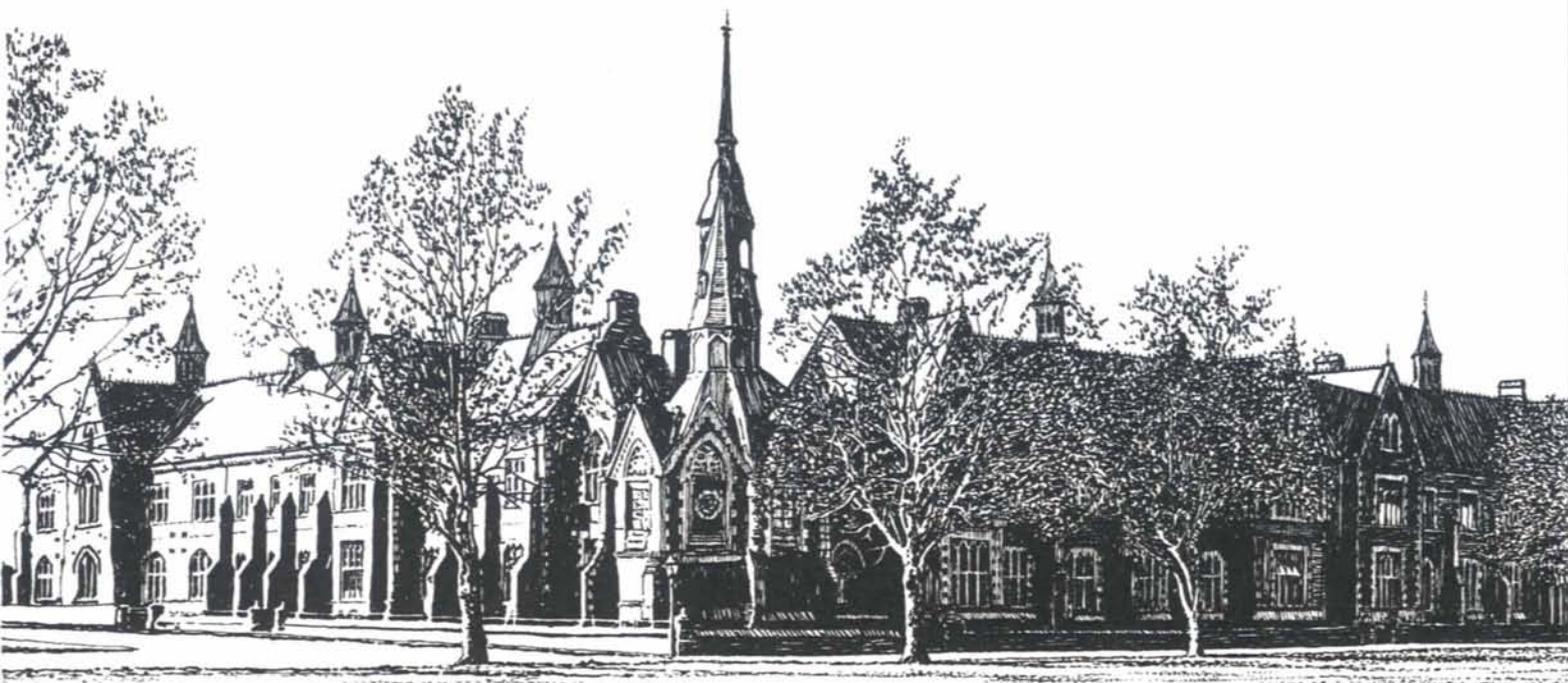


# THE ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE OF CHRISTCHURCH

## 1. The Normal School



CHRISTCHURCH CITY COUNCIL  
TOWN PLANNING DIVISION



## Preface

Christchurch, unlike New Zealand's other main centres, has a charm that depends largely on features built or planned by man. The calm and dignity of the city owes much to its early buildings, and Christchurch's history can still be traced in the many examples that remain. Action by the New Zealand Historic Places Trust (Canterbury Regional Committee) and other public interest groups has saved several important city buildings including the Provincial Government Buildings, Trinity Church, the Theatre Royal and the old University (now the Christchurch Arts Centre).

Yet, as the city grows and changes, there is a continuing danger that historically or environmentally valuable buildings may be thoughtlessly or unnecessarily destroyed. The Christchurch City Council District Planning Scheme lists 190 historic buildings and objects, and provides opportunities and incentives for their retention, but although the scheme fosters a climate of preservation, it is, in the end, only the determination of the community which can effectively protect or revitalise those buildings it considers important.

For this reason, a major aim of the present series of booklets is the identification and description of the city's most valuable historic buildings, in the hope that greater public awareness of their importance will contribute to their chances of survival. Even if preservation proves to be impossible in some cases, this series will gather together information, illustrations and analyses of each building to provide a published record of the rich architectural legacy inherited from previous generations.

If these booklets encourage you to think about the historical significance of this City's architecture, and if they help clarify in your mind the special values of Christchurch's historic buildings, then they will have in part met their goal.

# The Christchurch Normal School

## Introduction

The Christchurch Normal School, opened in April 1876, was the first normal (or model) school in New Zealand. It was built to provide a "normal" school environment, where teacher trainees could observe experienced teachers in a classroom situation. When this function was transferred to Elmwood School in 1954, the building became the training centre for the Post-Primary Department of the Christchurch Teachers' College. It was vacated when the college moved to Ilam in 1970.

The building occupies a commanding position on Cranmer Square, about five minutes' walk north-west from Cathedral Square. It gives a valued sense of scale and enclosure to the north-eastern corner of Cranmer Square, and creates a satisfying visual balance with the former Christchurch Girls' High School on the opposite side.

After the Normal School was vacated it was subject to neglect, vandalism and decay. Until mid 1980 demolition of the building seemed to be its inevitable fate. However, the outward appearance of deterioration belied its potential for occupation and conversion. Possibilities for rehabilitation were recognised by the local residents' group, ICON, and an imaginative scheme for retaining the building was developed.

When this booklet was written in 1980 the fate of the Normal School was still uncertain but in 1981 the task of converting the building to luxury apartments began and by 1985 the Kilmore Street wing was completed. This has assured the future of the Normal School in a new role as Cranmer Court.

## Plans for a new school and teachers' college

In April 1873 the Canterbury Board of Education met to discuss proposals for the construction of a new school and Teachers' College. The Board believed that:

"it was necessary to have an institution in the province to train young teachers and to impart the technical side of the art of teaching to educated persons of both sexes who might be willing to adopt the profession of teachers."

It was hoped that the model school attached would "give a tone to the other primary schools in the province" and that "the whole machinery of the Board of Education would find a home and centre."<sup>1</sup>

The school was to be the first normal or model school in New Zealand.

On April 18th 1873 the following advertisement appeared in *The Press*:

"The Board of Education have invited competitive designs for the projected normal school in Christchurch and offer premiums of £50 and £25 respectively for the first and second in order of merit. The site selected is on Cranmer Square. The time for receiving the designs has been fixed for Monday 2nd June next."<sup>2</sup>

Twelve entries were received and the winner was Samuel C. Farr, a Christchurch architect. The second prize was awarded to the designer of Dunedin's First Church, R. A. Lawson.<sup>3</sup>



Opinions of Samuel Farr's design expressed pride and satisfaction. *The Press*, Christchurch commented: "Mr. Farr's design is one of very great merit, both as to the style of architecture and the details of arrangement"<sup>4</sup>, and a month later they referred to the design as "... a very handsome addition to our public buildings."<sup>5</sup>



The school provides a dignified backdrop to ceremonial occasions in Cranmer Square

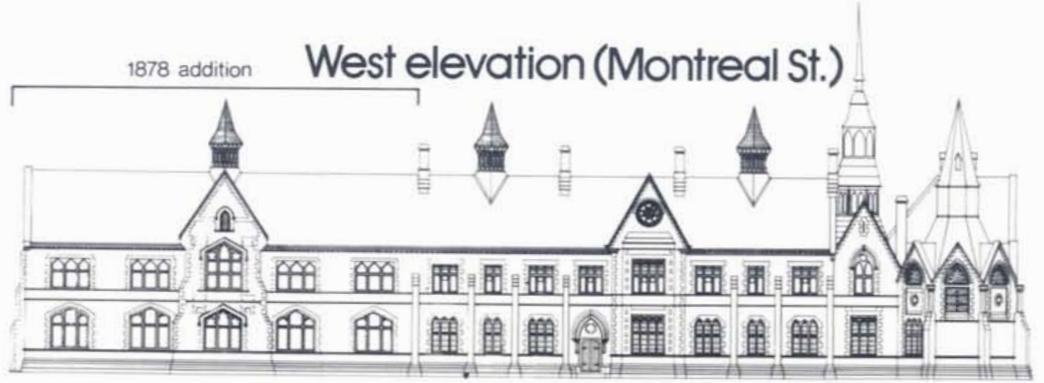
1. *The Press*, Christchurch, 17/12/1873, p.2. Speech given at the laying of the foundation stone by Mr. C. C. Bowen, Christchurch.  
2. *The Press*, 18/4/1873, p.2.  
3. Mr. Lawson travelled to Dunedin from Melbourne in the 1860s as a result of winning first prize in the competition for the design of Dunedin's First Church. This building is a magnificent piece of architecture. Its success

was widely acknowledged and brought Lawson further commissions, e.g. Knox Church in Dunedin and Otago Boys' High School. One wonders what R. A. Lawson's Normal School would have looked like.  
4. *The Press*, 17/6/1873, p.2.  
5. *The Press*, 22/7/1873, p.2.

South elevation (Kilmore St.)



West elevation (Montreal St.)



1878 addition

Ground floor plan

Metres

0 5 10 15 20

East elevation

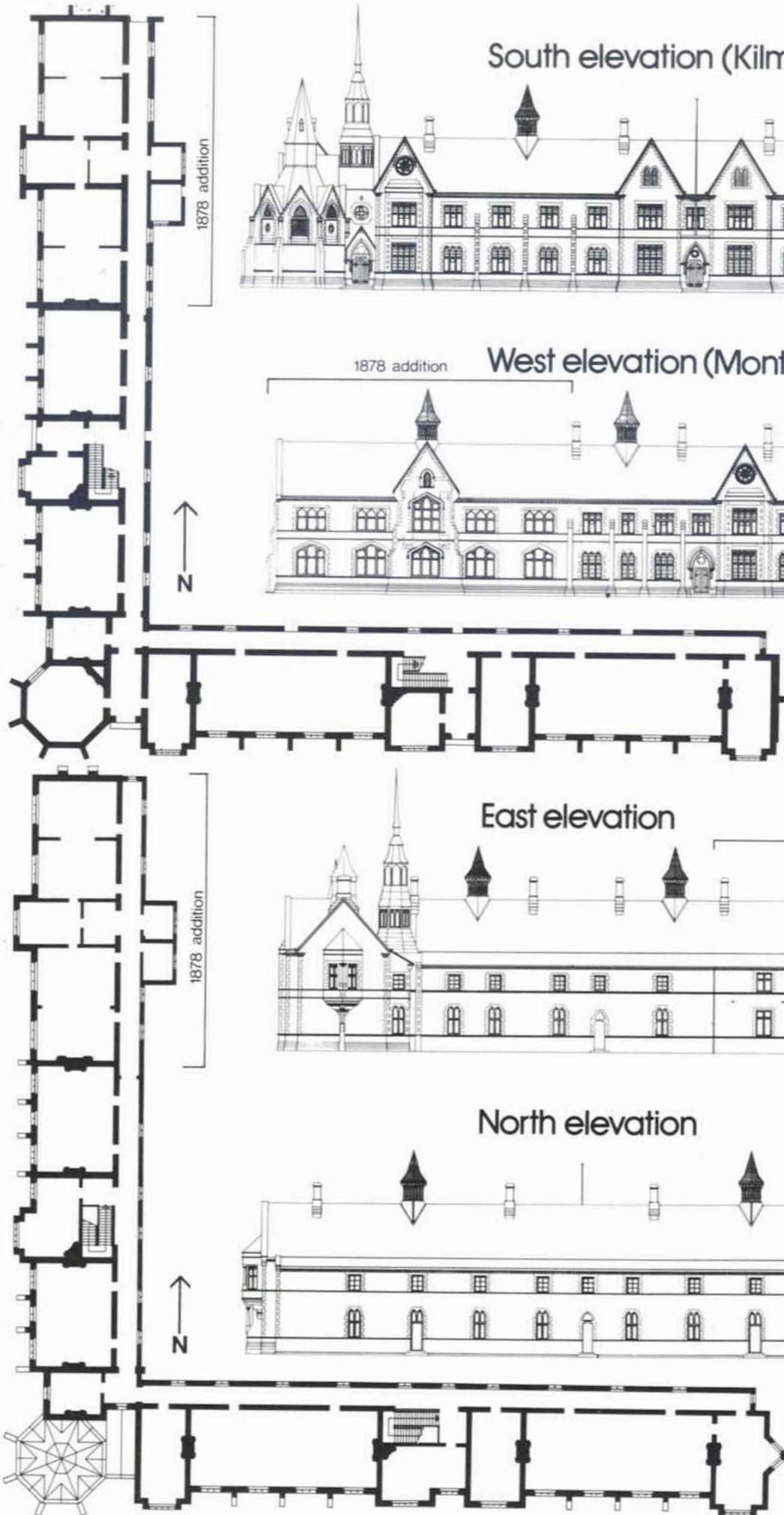


1878 addition

North elevation



First floor plan



1878 addition

N

1878 addition

N



St. Paul's



Samuel Farr

Canterbury Museum

## The architect

Samuel Farr was born in Baldock, Hertfordshire, England in 1827. On November 19th, 1849 he left London for New Zealand on board the *Monarch*. The ship was bound for Auckland, but it encountered a storm while crossing the Tasman Sea and sailed to Akaroa instead. Farr remained in Akaroa until 1862 where he was mainly involved in erecting sawmills. He then moved to Christchurch and practised as an architect. As well as designing the Akaroa Monument, his list of commissions indicates that he was favoured by the Presbyterian church. He designed Presbyterian Churches at Akaroa (1863); Lyttelton (1863); Kaiapoi (1875); Leeston (1879), and Bealey Avenue, as well as the first St Paul's Presbyterian Church (1864) on the corner of Cashel and Madras Streets, and the present (1876) St Paul's.

He was also responsible for the design of Mr. G.H. Moore's Glenmark home which burned down in 1891, and together with C. E. Fooks he drew up plans for R. H. Rhodes' home at Purau.

Other significant achievements were the design of the West Christchurch Borough School and a bas-relief of Banks Peninsula, for which he won a gold medal. He also designed the first iron verandahs in New Zealand and was placed second in the competition for the design of the Durham Street Methodist Church. (The winning design was by a Melbourne firm, Crouch and Wilson. Farr was actually asked to supervise the building of the church as the Melbourne architects were not available.)



Glenmark

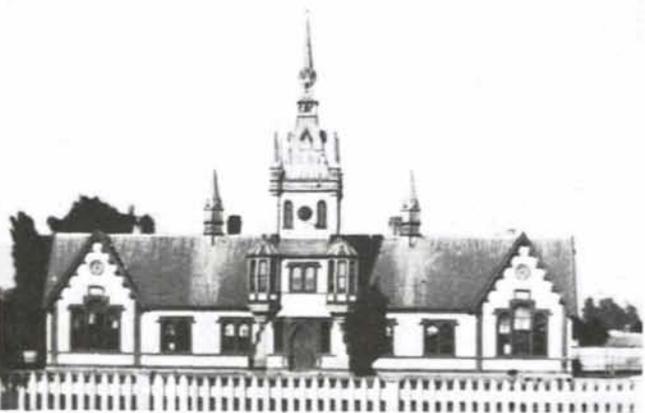
Canterbury Museum

## The style of the Normal School

Samuel Farr worked mainly in the revived Gothic style, using the simplest forms of Gothic Architecture, i.e. the Early English style from the period 1260 - 1340. Occasionally he worked in the Decorated style of the late fourteenth century. His use of these styles reveals the influence of the Ecclesiologists, a group of Church architecture enthusiasts who, in 1839, founded a society dedicated to the promotion of the Gothic style in architecture. They believed that the earliest Gothic style suited the nature of a raw young country. It was thought that as the colony developed, the later, more decorated Gothic style might be used. By the time the Normal School was built the early Victorian Gothic Revival had given way to the eclectic, often bizarre High Victorian Gothic phase but Farr's design reverts to the earlier period.

The Normal School recalls the rugged collegiate ensembles of A.W.N. Pugin, an architect whose ideas influenced the development of Victorian architecture. This brilliant designer collaborated with Sir Charles Barry on the Houses of Parliament at Westminster. The multitude of gables, chimneys, lanterns and spires that decorate the roofline of the Normal School and create a picturesque effect are features that were proclaimed by Pugin. For him the simpler parts of a building were not something to hide. They existed in their own right and even had a positive aesthetic value. In his architecture, the chimneys look like chimneys and also add to the picturesque effect of the building. The same applies to Samuel Farr's building which truthfully exposes chimneys and buttresses.

Pugin also believed that a wall must not be covered with large regularly cut facing stones, but should look rugged. Farr clearly supported this idea, for the walls of the Normal School were constructed with irregularly shaped blocks of Halswell stone. Similarly, the intricate designs of hinges and locks on the doors and ventilation grates on the walls of the building stem from his influence.



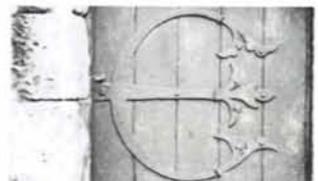
West Christchurch Borough School

Canterbury Museum



Canterbury Museum

Normal School, before removal of decorations



Pugin's ideas were enthusiastically adopted by William Butterfield and Richard Carpenter, two very important Victorian architects. A comparison of Butterfield's parsonage at Coalpitheath, Gloucestershire (1844-5) with Samuel Farr's Normal School reveals striking similarities between the two. Farr must have been familiar with Butterfield's design, because the use of rough grey stone on the sharp faces of the buildings, of white stone quoins on corners, of gabled portions which project at right angles to the main roof-line and the incorporation of steeply pitched slate roofs in both designs is similar. Furthermore, the lancet arch form, the square casement windows and the mullioned and transomed bay windows are present in both buildings.

Contrary to Pugin's principles of picturesque utility in planning, Farr's building is based on an 'L' shape plan with an octagon and spire at the angle of the 'L', and the elevation is made up of repetitive units.<sup>6</sup> Farr's octagon acts as a break in the design and creates variety on the facade. At the same time the inclusion of the octagon can be viewed as an uncompromising element which interrupts the pleasant unity of the wings.

When the Normal School was completed in 1874 the Montreal Street wing measured 145 feet and the Kilmore Street wing measured 244 feet. Later in 1878 the Montreal Street wing was extended to provide a kindergarten on the ground floor and a training department on the first floor. The architect of the extension was Thomas Cane, an Education Board architect. Cane designed the first Christchurch Girls' High School (1876-78) on the University town site. His addition to the Normal School is in keeping with the rest of the building.

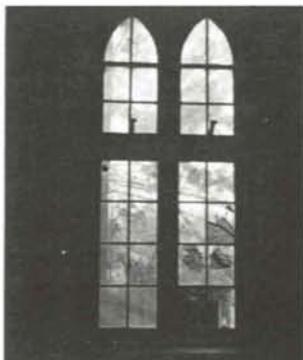
Many of the decorative details on the building are colonial adaptations of Gothic forms. The carving within the window heads is not true tracery but a simplification of the general form. There is, however, an example of plate tracery on the west face of the Montreal Street wing. (See glossary and photo). The rose window next to the octagon on the Kilmore Street wing is a very plain example of its kind and the wagon wheels beneath some of the gables and the frilly cusp shape carving surrounding the windows of the octagon are unusual features. The oriel window at the east end of the building (a Tudor motif revived during the Victorian period) is also quite different. Although the proportions are heavy and thick, it is nevertheless a refreshing element in the design.



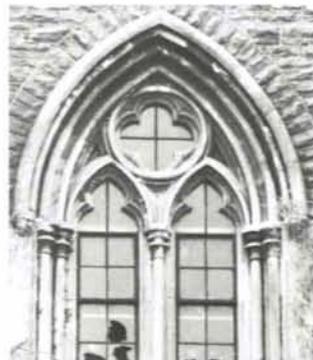
*Coalpitheath parsonage*



*Interior courtyard of the Normal School*



*Lancet arch*



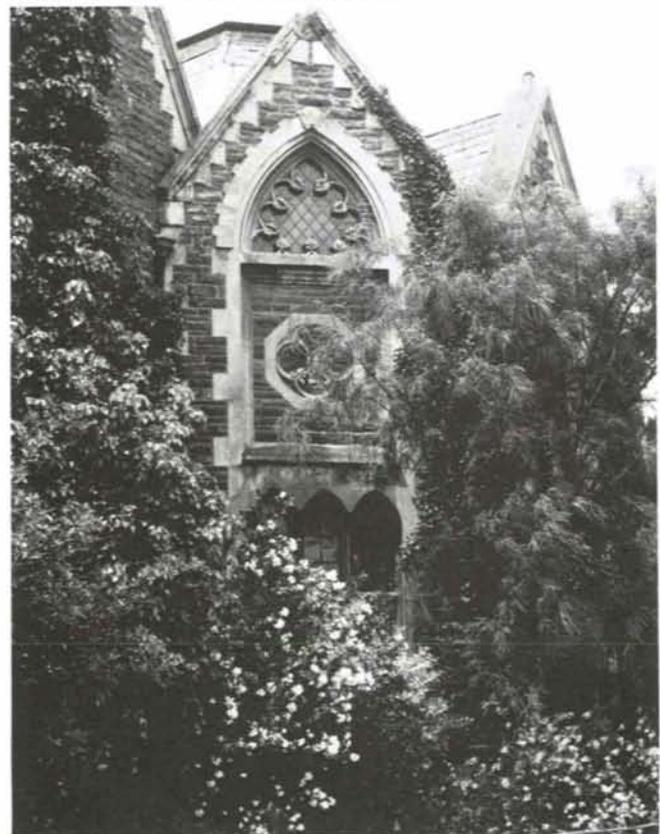
*Plate tracery*



*Rose window*



*Wagon Wheel*



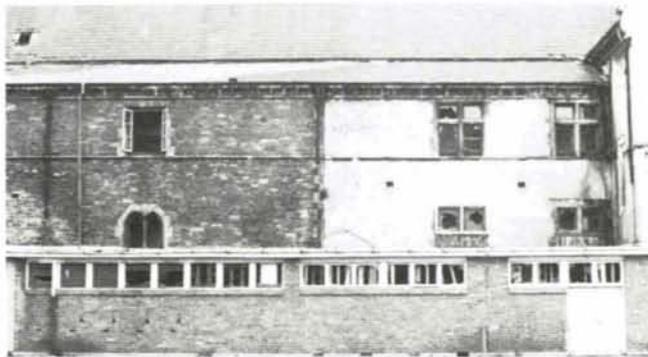
*The octagon*

6. The polygonal form was used for the pavilion at the Oxford University Museum (1855 - 60) and for Cathedral chapter houses.



*The oriel window*

The stone details on the 1878 addition are simpler than those on the rest of the building. Perhaps the architect was restricted by a limited budget because there is less carving around the windows, the shapes are simpler and the courtyard walls are plastered brickwork instead of stone. The latter expense-saving device was often employed on New Zealand buildings for walls that faced away from the street.



*Plaster finish on the courtyard walls*

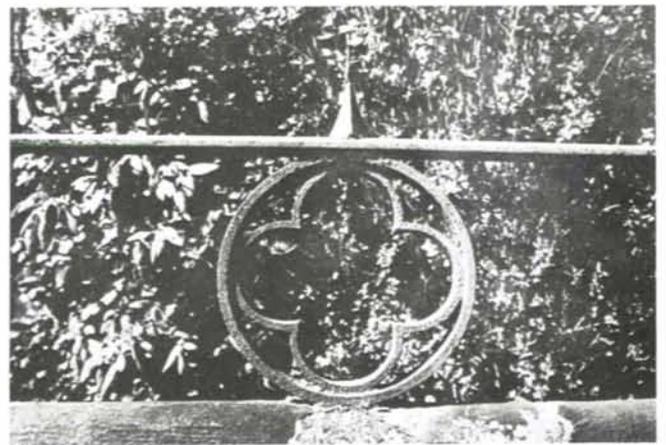
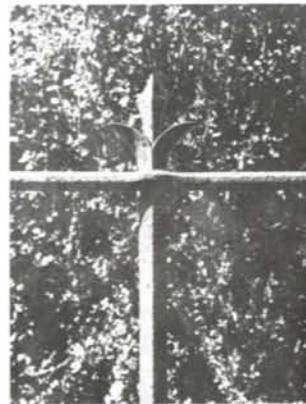


*Simpler details on the 1878 addition*



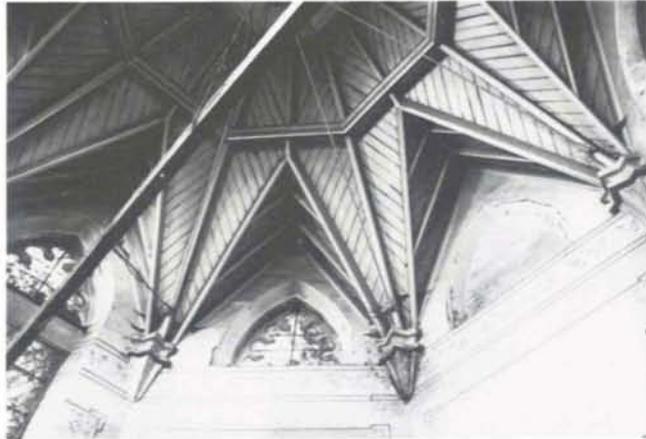
*The original spires and decorations*

Originally the entire roof line was fringed with delicate iron cresting and the gables and spires were topped with slender iron finials. The removal of these features and of the spires and patterned wrought iron fence railing which once enclosed the building has altered the effect of the building considerably.

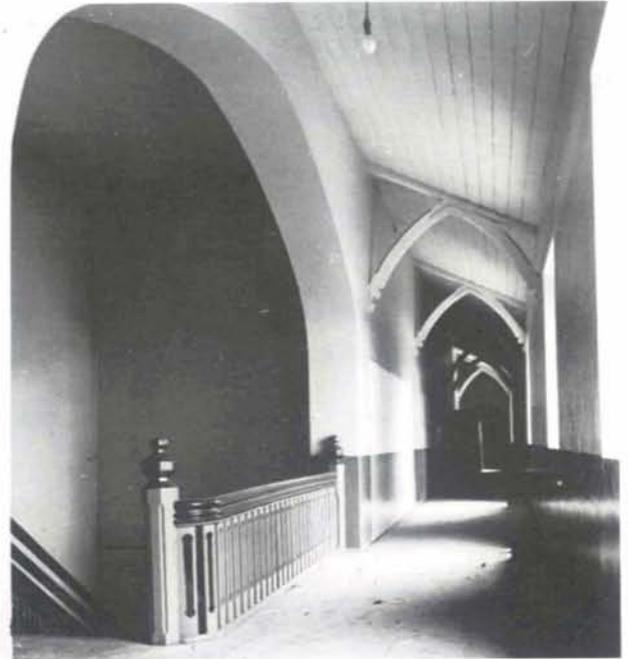


*The original wrought iron fence*

Inside, the layout of the rooms echoes the divisions on the facade. The interior is plain and austere and there is little detailing. However, the clean precise lines of arches, staircases and ceilings more than compensate for this austerity. Perhaps the most impressive part of the design is the octagon. This is a small room with an intricate system of vaulting in its roof. Remains of a delicate stencilled frieze can be seen on the walls.



Octagon ceiling



Interior, before the vandals



Frieze on the octagon walls



Vandalism and decay

## Construction

"The building, after a design by Mr S. C. Farr, architect, of Christchurch, is in the Gothic Style, having a frontage of 244 ft. on Kilmore Street and a frontage on Montreal Street of 145 ft., with walls 34ft to the eaves. It will be built of blue stone from the Halswell quarries, relieved with white stone

dressings. When completed it will accommodate twelve hundred children, besides being a training school for teachers. The total cost when completed will be £14,269, and contracts for the same have been taken by Mr D. Reese, builder, Christchurch."<sup>7</sup>



Under construction, 1874

7. *The Press*, Christchurch, 17/12/1873, p2.

# The builder

Daniel Reese was educated and trained as a builder at Motherwell in Lanarkshire. In May 1862 he travelled to Christchurch on the *New Zealandia*. On his arrival he found employment with a Mr. Joseph Bailey as a carpenter. Later he worked with Rankin and Grieg (builders) and then he set up business on his own. He was a competent and successful builder. In fact, his list of constructions suggests that he was one of Christchurch's most sought after builders. He built St. Paul's Presbyterian Church on the corner of Cashel and Madras Streets, parts of Lincoln College, the Trinity Centre in Worcester Street, Mortens Block and the Chief Post Office in Cathedral Square, United Service Hotel, parts of Sunnyside, the Union Bank, the first Christchurch Girls' High School, the present Christchurch Girls' High School in Cranmer Square, and the main block of the Normal School.

The erection of the Normal School presented Reese with problems. The site was on a swamp, and the foundations once constructed had to be deepened and widened in order to be secure. Reese wrote to the "Lyttelton Times" saying that the triangle enclosed by Kilmore, Montreal and

Victoria Streets was notoriously boggy, that children were unhealthy there, and that his own child came home from the Normal School with diphtheria. Reese was not alone in his criticism of the site and building. In 1874 C.C. Bowen stated in his annual report to the Education Board, "The arrangements as to ventilation, warming and doorways are unsatisfactory and those in the back premises not convenient."<sup>8</sup>

A.G. Butchers expressed similar sentiments.

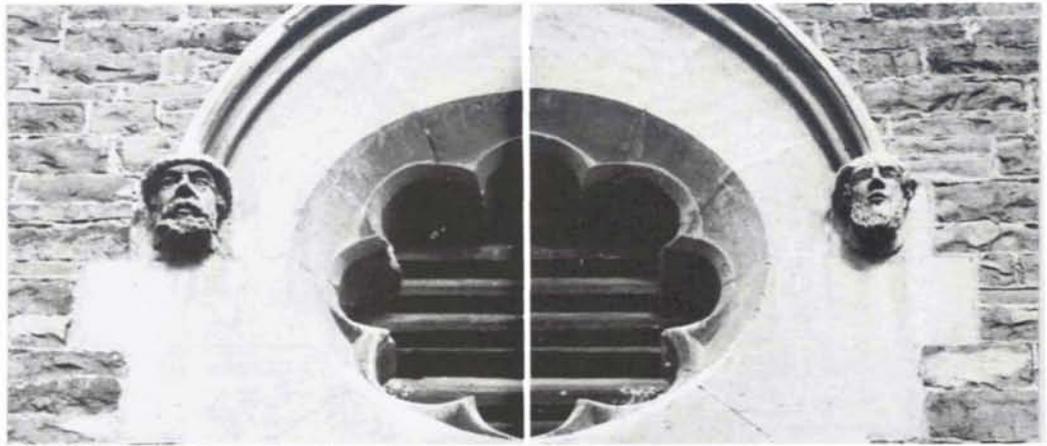
"Its exterior appearance was imposing enough but inside it was gloomy, dark and ill-ventilated, with its windows south instead of north - a monument to conservatism and custom and bearing outwardly the marks of church influence on the architecture of the school."<sup>9</sup>

It is possible that Samuel Farr designed the building to suit the position of the Northern Hemisphere sun, but it seems more likely that the classrooms were placed on the south side to take advantage of the school's commanding view of Cranmer Square, and to give a more interesting street facade.

Canterbury Museum



Daniel Reese



Carved heads on the north wall

# The stone mason

Mr William Brassington was employed to carve the stone details for the school. He was born in Nottinghamshire in 1840. In 1863 he travelled to New Zealand on the *Brothers Pride*. Settling in Christchurch he worked as a builder in stone and as a sculptor. His workshop and yard were situated at the south end of the Barbadoes Street Cemetery.

Among his known works were the pulpit (designed by Mountfort and Bury) for St John's Church in Latimer Square, the pedestal for the Godley statue and the exterior carvings of the Canterbury Museum. His son Claudius carved the legend over the Museum portico "Lo these are parts of his ways..." Brassington also received requests for stone work further afield than Christchurch. He built the church at Mt Peel for J. B. Acland, Allandale Homestead near Governor's Bay and the Time Ball Tower at Lyttelton. Perhaps his most significant commission was for the carving on the Provincial Government Buildings. He included in this carving a likeness of himself with mallet and chisel and one of Mountfort (the architect for the Provincial Government Buildings) in the corbels.

The heads carved on the northern end of the Normal School could represent the architect and the stone mason, or the builder and the stone mason. This cannot be verified; however it was usual to see figures decorating buildings at this time. The carved details on the Normal School include a wide range of small birds, animals and plants. The rose, the thistle and the shamrock above a doorway on the Kilmore Street facade are thought to represent the nationalities (England, Scotland and Ireland) of the pioneers in New Zealand.



A. C. Loach

8. Butchers A.G. *A Centennial History of Education in Canterbury, Christchurch, 1953.*

9. *ibid* This comment that the architecture of the school bears the

marks of church influence is confusing. The design, in fact, recalls the collegiate ensembles of A.W.N. Pugin and Butterfield. These may seem to have a church-like appearance.

# Laying of the foundation stone.

The ceremony was performed by the Governor, Sir James Fergusson, Bart. in the presence of a large crowd of spectators.

"Amongst those present were the Right Reverend the Primate of New Zealand, His Honour the Superintendent, His Honour Mr. Justice Gresson, the very Reverend the Dean of Christchurch, the Reverend Isaac Zacharich, the Reverend J. Buller, the Reverend W. J. Habens B.A., Reverend R. Morten. Several of the clergy of the Church of England and ministers of other denominations, Mr. C. C. Bowen, Chairman, and members of the Board of Education, His Worship the Mayor of Christchurch, with some of the City Councillors, members of the Provincial Council, and Provincial Executive, and a large number of ladies."<sup>10</sup>

The ceremony began with a prayer spoken by the Right Reverend the Primate. This was followed by an address from Mr. C. C. Bowen, Chairman of the Board of Education, who gave an account of a record of the Normal School which had been illuminated on vellum.

The record contained the following:

## Normal School.

"Ten thousand pounds was voted by the Provincial Council for the erection of a normal and model school combined, A.D., 1872-73.

The design by S. C. Farr, architect, was accepted on the 16th June 1873, and a contract entered into with Daniel Reese, builder, on the 9th day of October, 1873, for a portion of the building for the sum of £10,280.

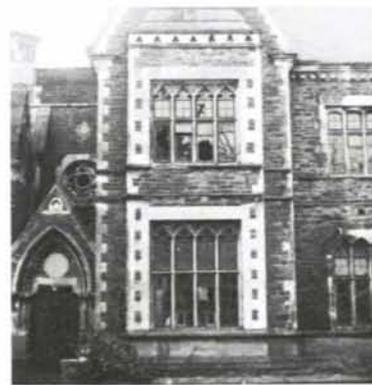
The Provincial Council having approved of a further expenditure a contract was agreed to on the 15th day of December 1873, being the twenty-third Anniversary of the Province. - William Rolleston, Superintendent.

Members of the Board of Education - Charles Christopher Bowen, Chairman, William Montgomery, George Gould, Thomas William Maude, Arthur Charles Knight, Walter Kennaway, Jon Inglis and John Norris Tosswill."<sup>11</sup>

This record, together with copies of *The Press* and *Lyttelton Times* and several coins, had been placed in a hermetically sealed glass vase and placed in the cavity by the architect. The Governor then received a silver trowel from Mr. Bowen and:

"...having spread the mortar, the stone was lowered to its place, and striking it with the mallet his Excellency said - I declare this stone to be well and truly laid, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen."<sup>12</sup>

Finally, Mr. Samuel Farr presented the Governor with a photograph of the two front elevations of the building.



## Chronology of some important events that took place at the Christchurch Normal School 1873-1970.

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <p><b>1873</b> Foundation stone laid.</p> <p><b>1875</b> Canterbury Education Board moved in and took the octagonal tower room as a board room and the rooms on either side as administration offices. The Board remained there until 1917 and then moved to Oxford Terrace.</p> <p><b>1876</b> Children were transferred from the school in Durham Street. The Normal School opened in April, 1876, with an average attendance of 215 boys and 176 girls. The first headmaster of the school was Mr. John Curnow.</p> <p><b>1877</b> The first student teachers arrived, and the Normal School started to function as a Training College and model school. It began with a roll of 11 students and by the end of the year the roll was up to 53, 39 of whom were women. From the beginning a concurrent course was run with Canterbury College, and students while training were able to study for university degrees.</p> <p><b>1878-9</b> The Montreal Street wing was extended providing room for a kindergarten on the ground floor and training department on the first floor.</p> <p><b>1880-90</b> Depression. The number of students was reduced.</p> <p><b>1888</b> Christchurch suffered an earthquake. Four chimneys on the western wing were split, some</p> | <p>spires bent, the top stones on the northern gables were displaced, one of the chimneys on the southern wing was completely shaken down and a distinct crack appeared between the new addition to the western wing and the old building.</p> <p><b>1924-25</b> Teachers College students transferred to the Primary Division Building, on the corner of Montreal and Peterborough Streets.</p> <p><b>1954</b> The Normal School was transferred to Elmwood. The old school then became the training centre for the Post-Primary Department of the Christchurch Teachers' College.</p> <p><b>1954-60</b> Other occupants of the building during this period were the Music Department of the Primary Division, and for shorter periods, the Department of Education's Speech Clinics, the Remedial Reading Clinic, the Art Section and a Homecraft and Cooking Centre. On Saturday mornings the whole of the School was taken over by groups of the School of Instrumental Music. The W.E.A. and Musical Societies met there in the evenings. It was also an official Polling Booth and examination centre.</p> <p><b>1970</b> The Post-Primary Department of the Teachers' College moved to new buildings at Ilam leaving the old building vacant.</p> |
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<sup>10</sup> *The Press*, Christchurch, 17/12/1873, p2.

<sup>11</sup> *ibid*

<sup>12</sup> *ibid*

# A summary of events and decisions affecting the Normal School 1952 - 1982

**1952:** Professor Vernon Griffiths in a report to the University Council recommended that the University of Canterbury should acquire the Normal School as a conservatorium.

**1958 July:** J. A. Bigg, architect for the Canterbury Education Board, drew up plans for the conversion of the Normal School into a shopping centre. It provided for a supermarket, dairy, pharmacy, fruit shop, tobacconist, creche, a Government book shop in the Octagon, a wine shop, quick lunch bar, antique shop, laundry, bank, sports shop and butcher.

**1963 October:** The Director of Education asked for a full structural report on the Christchurch Normal School.

**1964 January:** The structural report was completed by the Ministry of Works. The contents remained confidential. It stated that the general structural condition of the building was very poor and that it must be replaced within three years.

**1968 November:** The Normal School listed as an object or place of historic interest in Appendix K of the publicly notified Christchurch City Council District Planning Scheme.

**1969 January:** The Minister of Works, on behalf of the Minister of Education, objected to the Christchurch City Council's designation of the Normal School as an object or place of historic or scientific interest or natural beauty.

**1969:** As a result of the structural report, the Government decided that the Normal School was unsafe and restoration was impractical.

**1969 July:** The Christchurch School of Instrumental Music approached the Christchurch City Council expressing a wish to use the building. They also approached the Historic Places Trust asking for support.

**1969-1970:** The New Zealand Historic Places Trust Canterbury Regional Committee made repeated efforts to get the Ministry of Works report released.

**1970 June:** The Christchurch Civic Trust wrote to the Minister of Education asking to see the Ministry of Works' structural report, stating: "As taxpayers we have already paid for this report and it is ridiculous that we should be asked to pay for another."

Later the Trust asked that permission be given for the Trust's engineers to have access to the Norman School to make a structural report.

**1971:** The Ministry of Works described the building as "so structurally unsound that no way could be seen to make it safe for future use."

**1971 May:** The Minister of Works served a requirement on the Christchurch City Council to designate the Normal School and the Primary Teachers College building as a proposed Technical Institute. The Minister commented:

"Even if the structure was sound, the design and layout of the building is functionally sub-standard to house a modern technical institute. For these reasons it is not possible to retain this building indefinitely and you will be advised in due course when the building is to be demolished."

**1971 June:** Public Notices appeared in *The Press* on Friday 25 June, 1971 and Monday 5 July, 1971. They read: "that the Minister of Works required the Council to designate in its District Scheme as 'Proposed Technical Institute' the following properties:

- a) The Christchurch Normal School
- b) The Primary Teachers College."

This plan was for a multi-storey block on the site.

**1971 June:** In commenting on the Ministerial requirements, the Christchurch branch of the Institute of Architects advised the City Council that the building had no great architectural merit or significance. Any funds etc. available should be concentrated on the much more important Provincial Government Buildings and the University buildings on the city site. The Historic Places Trust believed that the building had historic merit as the chief surviving building concerned with general public education during the provincial period, but felt it was unable to press the case for total preservation in view of the unfavourable engineering report. However, they wanted consideration to be given to retaining the Octagon.

**1971 July:** The City Council decided to withdraw its objection to the Ministerial requirement and decided not to support the preservation of the Normal School as a place of historic interest. The decision was based on reports from the Institute of Architects, the Historic Places Trust, and the City Architect who commented that "the building was of no great architectural significance and that it was structurally unsound and this could not be remedied without excessive cost." The Council therefore agreed with the statement by the Minister of Works that the building could not be altered to a modern technical institute, but hoped however that the Octagon would be retained.

**1971 August:** Mr Don Donnithorne, Dr. A.H.W. Harte and R. J. Scarlett wrote many letters to the newspapers challenging the assertion that the Normal School was structurally unsound.

**1972 February:** The Civic Trust produced three structural reports, prepared by Mr N. D. Hardie, Mr S. P. Pascoe, and Mr H. G. Royds and Mr. I. G. B. Wilson. (They considered that the building could be strengthened and preserved for occupation). The reports concluded that the strengthening would be cheaper than demolishing the old school and building a new structure of the same floor area.

**1972 August:** The Christchurch City Council District Planning Scheme was made operative and the Normal School was retained in Appendix K as a place of historic interest.

**1973:** J. W. Davey completed perspective drawings, plans, a structural report and historical notes about the Normal School. (The School of Architecture Library, Auckland University, holds copies of these).

**1974 April:** The Christchurch City Council initiated Change 40 to its operative District Scheme. This change sought to extend the list of buildings deemed to be of historic or architectural value, and detailed three levels of protection for various groups of these buildings. The Normal School was originally classified as Group 1. However, after a series of hearings the Octagon was reclassified separately in Group 2 which comprised:

"Those buildings, places and objects which are of such quality and character that they ought not to be destroyed or altered unless there is a most compelling reason. They deserve as much protection as the community is prepared to offer them."

The main wings of the building were placed in Group 2, but after a series of public hearings were reclassified in Group 3 which comprised:

"Those buildings, objects and places that should be listed and recorded as a matter of public interest."

The Ministry of Works and Development had objected to the Normal School being in Appendix K in any form.

**Note:** This Scheme Change did not become operative.

**1974 June:** The Civic Trust sent a telegram to the Minister of Education asking him to receive a deputation to consider the future of the building, even though it had been condemned by the Ministry of Works.

**1974 October:** The Education Department delayed a final decision on the fate of the Normal School. It was reported in the local newspapers that vandals had moved in.

**1975 January:** Mr. S. P. Pascoe drew up a plan for the possible redevelopment of the School. It consisted of a U-shaped complex of the old building, and a new one surrounding a central courtyard. The corridors of the School were to be opened up to provide an airy cloister.

**1975 January:** In a letter to a local newspaper, Mr A. H. W. Harte questioned the fate of the Normal School:

"The Normal School has been stigmatised as structurally unsound, an earthquake risk - but what of its contemporaries, Trinity Congregational Church, and the old University buildings. The same builders worked on their construction, similar materials were used. They are reprieved, but the Normal School is suspect. It seems illogical."

**1975 August:** The City Council Traffic Engineers proposed a road realignment in Montreal Street by the Normal School. Three proposals were floated:

1. To ease the corners by the Normal School and

- Cranmer Square;  
 2. To carry a road south to north in the centre of Cranmer Square;  
 3. To build a new road substantially to the east of the Octagon.

**1975 November:** Mr R. A. Owen proposed a possible use for the Normal School. It would contain shops, restaurant and other commercial and possibly light industrial uses.

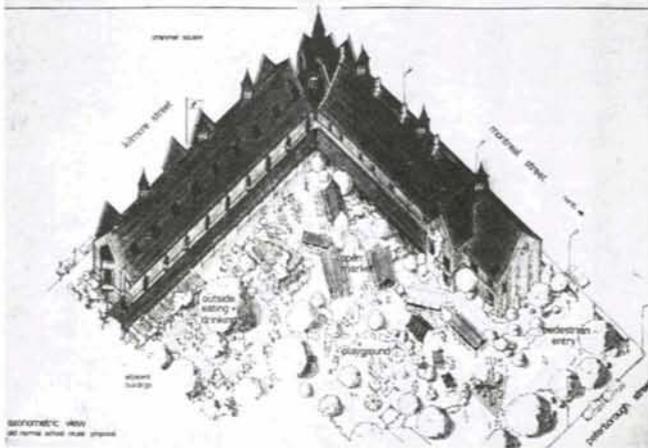
**1976 December:** The Assistant City Planner convened a working group to examine the rehabilitation prospects of the Old Normal School. The City Council Architects Division was asked to report on the possibility of converting the building into apartments. No report was made on this, and the working group lapsed after a series of discussions and visits to the site.

**1977 November:** The Civic Trust, the Canterbury Regional Committee of the Historic Places Trust and the Art Centre Board wrote to various Government Ministers seeking clarification of the grounds on which the fate of the Normal School would be decided.

**1978 March:** Rumour circulated that a contract for demolition of the building was proceeding. The Civic Trust sent an urgent telegram to the Prime Minister and Minister of Lands asking to negotiate with them to purchase the building outright. The Civic Trust was asked to produce a comprehensive proposal.

**1978 June:** The Ministry of Works structural report of January 1964 was finally made available to the Civic Trust.

**1979 March:** The Civic Trust presented a report and plans to the Department of Lands and Survey concerning the restoration of the Normal School. A tavern and restaurant with associated outdoor space, craft shop and plant shop in the Octagon, apartments and folk music rooms were proposed. The report contained a feasibility study, a structural report made by Hardie and Anderson, and designs and plans drawn up by a class of Technical Institute students.



*The Civic Trust proposal*

**1979 May:** As part of its District Scheme Review investigations, the City Council approached the Commissioner of Crown Lands regarding initial proposals for the realignment of Montreal Street in Cranmer Square which involved taking a portion off the Octagon.

**1979 December:** The Reviewed Christchurch City District Scheme contained an appendix plan showing a realignment of Montreal Street passing through part of the school site.

**1980 February:** The Minister of Lands announced that all the Normal School was to be demolished, but that the Department would facilitate the retention of the Octagon portion by gifting it and the parcel of land on which it sat to the City Council. The excessive cost of preserving the building was cited as a major reason for the decision.

**1980 February:** *The Press* quoted the Chairman of the Civic Trust, Mr Graham Robertson:

"...after 10 years of 'procrastination by Government departments' it came as no surprise that the Minister had decided to have the building demolished. Our reaction is sheer disappointment at the incredible nature of the decision after 10 years of hassles, he said.

In its present state there was little alternative but if a decision had been made 10 years ago it could have been preserved, he said. Successive

Ministers had shown a complete lack of activity on a decision about the building, and in that time it had deteriorated and become so badly vandalised that the decision was 'made for them' in the end, said Mr. Robertson."

**1980 February:** The City Planner convened a meeting of groups and individuals with an interest in the Christchurch Normal School. The Old Normal School Co-ordinating Committee was formalised as a sub-committee of the Council and took as its chief tasks the supervision of the demolition of the main wings, and the discussion of schemes for the restoration and use of the Octagon. Initial consideration was given to an educational museum. The Ferrymead Trust was given a contract to conduct a salvage operation when demolishing the building. All re-usable items such as dressed stone, slates, and timbers were to be recovered and stockpiled at Ferrymead for use in restoring other stone buildings in the city and for new buildings at Ferrymead Historic Village.

**1980 May:** A photographic record of the Christchurch Normal School was compiled by the City Council. Mr A. Seymour built a model of the Octagon.

**1980 June:** The Inner City Operative Neighbourhood Group approached the City Council and Department of Lands and Survey with a proposal for the rehabilitation of the whole of the Old Normal School. ICON was a neighbourhood committee set up in May 1980 to represent the views and needs of the residents of the North West inner city area.

**1980 July:** On a national Community Favour Day, over two hundred people helped to clean the building of all rubbish and rubble.

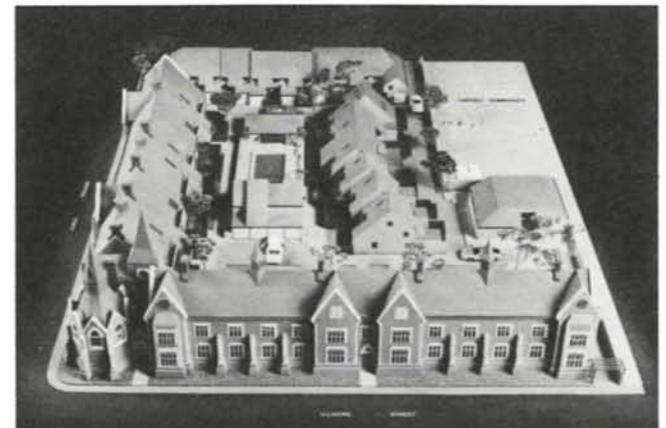
**1980 September:** The Old Normal School Co-ordinating Committee received a feasibility study from ICON which examined four alternative schemes for the re-use of the building. The formation of a Trust to oversee the development was mooted.

**1980 September:** A fierce fire in an adjoining building threatened the east wing of the school.

**1981 February:** A Christchurch property development firm, Paynter and Hamilton, advertised their intention to develop the Normal School site, including the preservation of the school building. An option to purchase the building was allowed to lapse.

**1981 September:** An investment company, Berryman Properties Ltd, took over the previous conditional option to purchase the Normal School. The company planned to convert the building into 22 luxury apartments and to build 15 town houses on the balance of the land. The development was to be called Cranmer Court.

**1982 January:** Conversion of the Kilmore Street wing commenced.



*Model of the Berryman Properties Ltd proposal*

**1982 June:** A conservation covenant was entered into by Berryman Properties with the Department of Lands and Survey to ensure that the building was preserved and its architectural integrity was retained.

**1982 September:** A restaurant was established in the Octagon.

**1982 September:** The first apartment unit was completed and sold.

**1984 February:** Financial difficulties experienced by Berryman Properties Ltd stopped the scheme of redevelopment.

**1984 April:** Fletcher Development and Construction Ltd negotiated a building contract to complete stage 1.  
**1984 September:** Fletcher Development and Construction Ltd acquired the rights to develop stages 2 and 3.  
**1985 March:** Conversion of the Kilmore Street wing was completed.



The Press, Christchurch.

First display unit, October 1982.

**1985 June:** Conversion of the Montreal Street wing commenced.  
**1986 August:** A new spire was constructed on the Octagon.



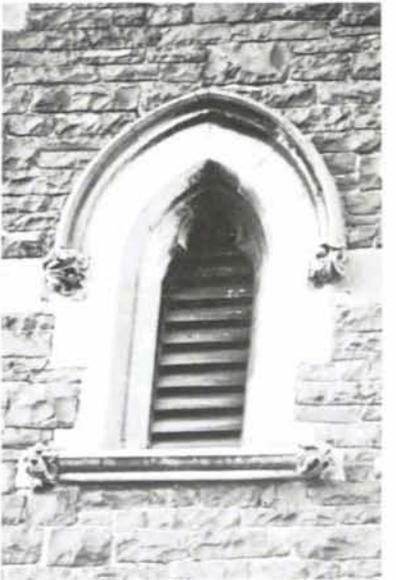
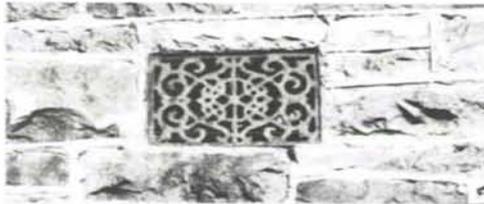
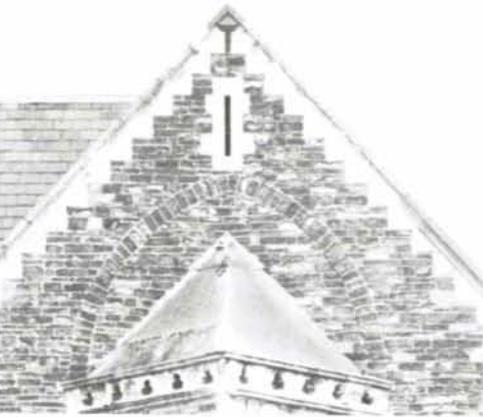
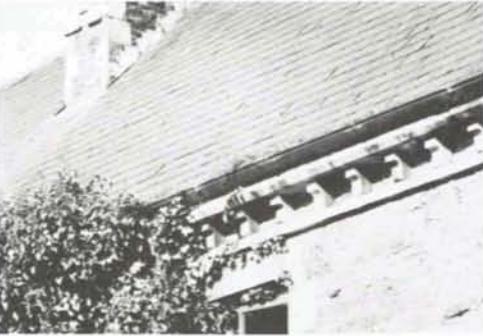
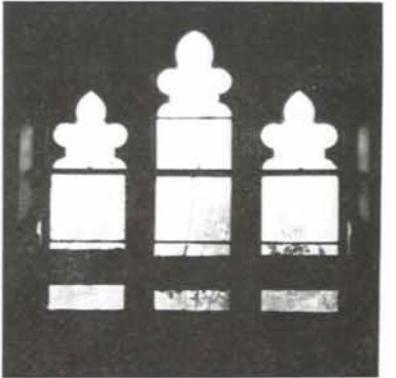
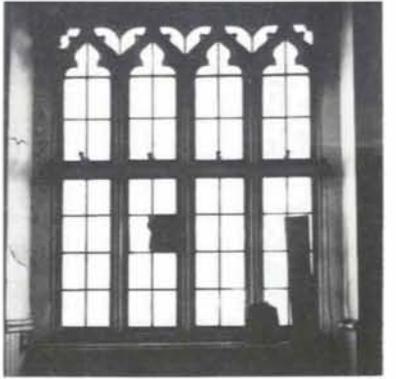
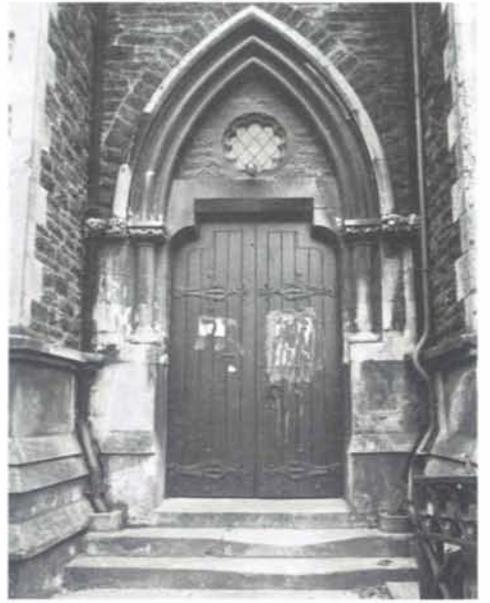
Northern elevation during reconstruction, August 1982.



Reconstructed north elevation, 1986.

## Glossary

<b>Bas-relief</b>	Piece of shallow carving or sculpture on a background.	<b>Medallion</b>	Decorative panel.
<b>Bay window</b>	An angular projection of a house front filled with window.	<b>Mullion</b>	An intermediate vertical member of a window frame, door frame or similar structure. (See Transom).
<b>Bow Window</b>	A curved projection of a house front filled with windows.	<b>Oriel Window</b>	A bay or bow shaped window on an upper floor only.
<b>Buttress</b>	A mass of masonry or brickwork projecting from or built against a wall to give additional strength.	<b>Pedestal</b>	In classical architecture the base supporting a column or colonnade, also more loosely, the base for a statue or any superstructure.
<b>Corbel</b>	A projecting block, usually of stone, supporting a beam or other horizontal member.	<b>Portico</b>	A roofed space open or partly enclosed, forming the entrance and centrepiece of a facade of a temple, house or church.
<b>Elevation</b>	The external faces of a building; also a drawing made in projection on a vertical plane to show any one face or elevation of a building.	<b>Quoin</b>	A stone or brick helping to form a corner of a wall of masonry.
<b>Facade</b>	Face of building towards street or open space.	<b>Spire</b>	A tall pyramidal, polygonal or conical structure rising from a tower, turret, or roof and terminating in a point. It can be of stone, or of timber covered with shingles or lead.
<b>Finial</b>	A pointed ornament fixed vertically at the top of a gable or spire.	<b>Tracery</b>	The ornamental intersecting work in the upper part of a window, screen, or panel, or used decoratively in blank arches and vaults.
<b>Frieze</b>	Band of decoration.	<b>Transom</b>	A horizontal bar of stone, metal or wood separating a door from a fanlight over it, for example. (See Mullion).
<b>Gable</b>	The triangular upper portion of a wall at the end of a pitched roof. It normally has straight sides, but there are variants.	<b>Vaults</b>	An arched ceiling or roof of stone or brick, sometimes imitated in wood or plaster.
<b>Illumination</b>	Manuscript etc. decorated with gold, silver and brilliant colours.		
<b>Lancet arch</b>	A slender pointed arch.		
<b>Lantern</b>	A small circular or polygonal turret with windows all round, crowning a roof or dome.		



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