



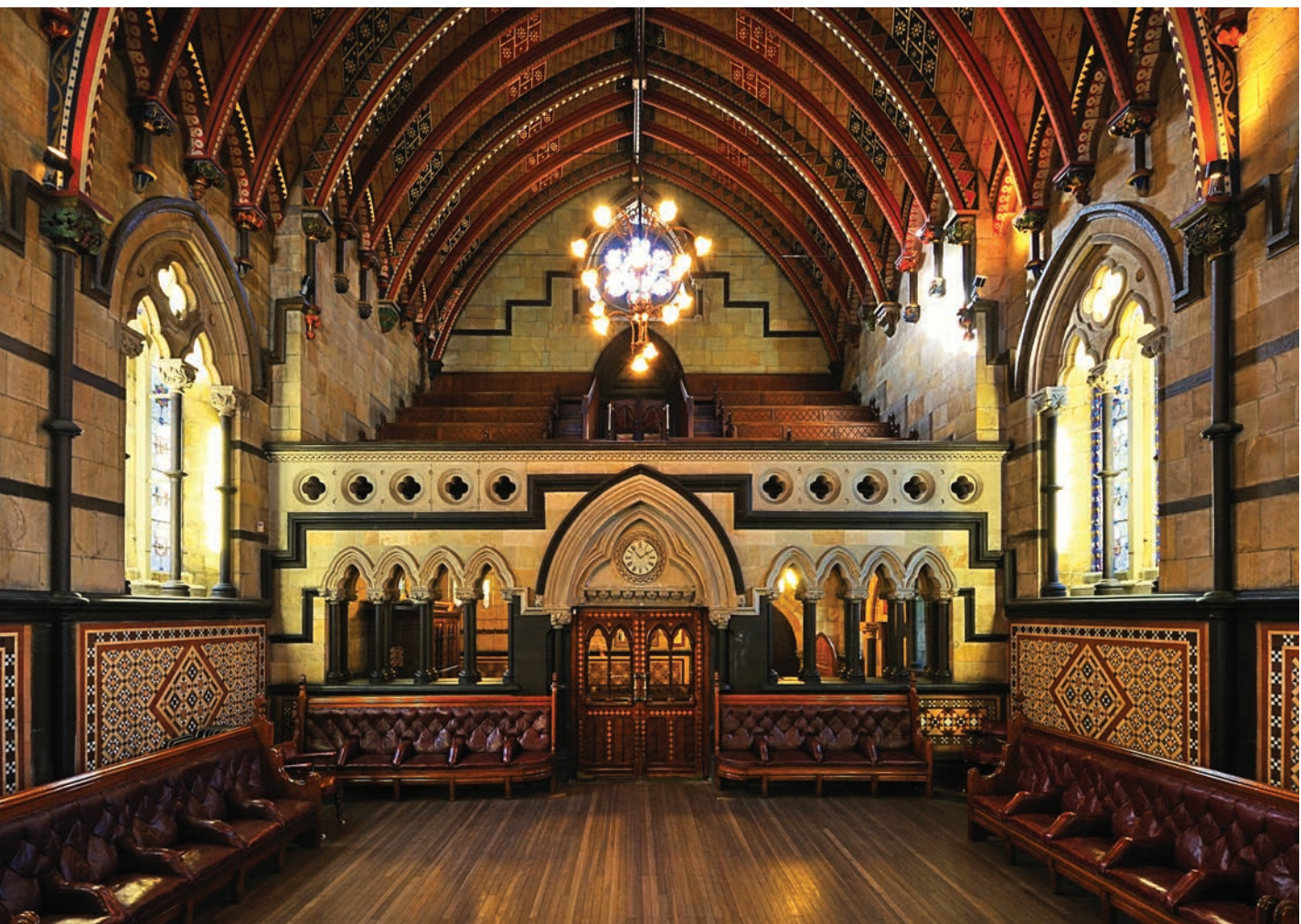
POLITICS AND PROGRESS IN EARLY CANTERBURY

*As the seat of power in early Canterbury,
these buildings once echoed with political debate.*

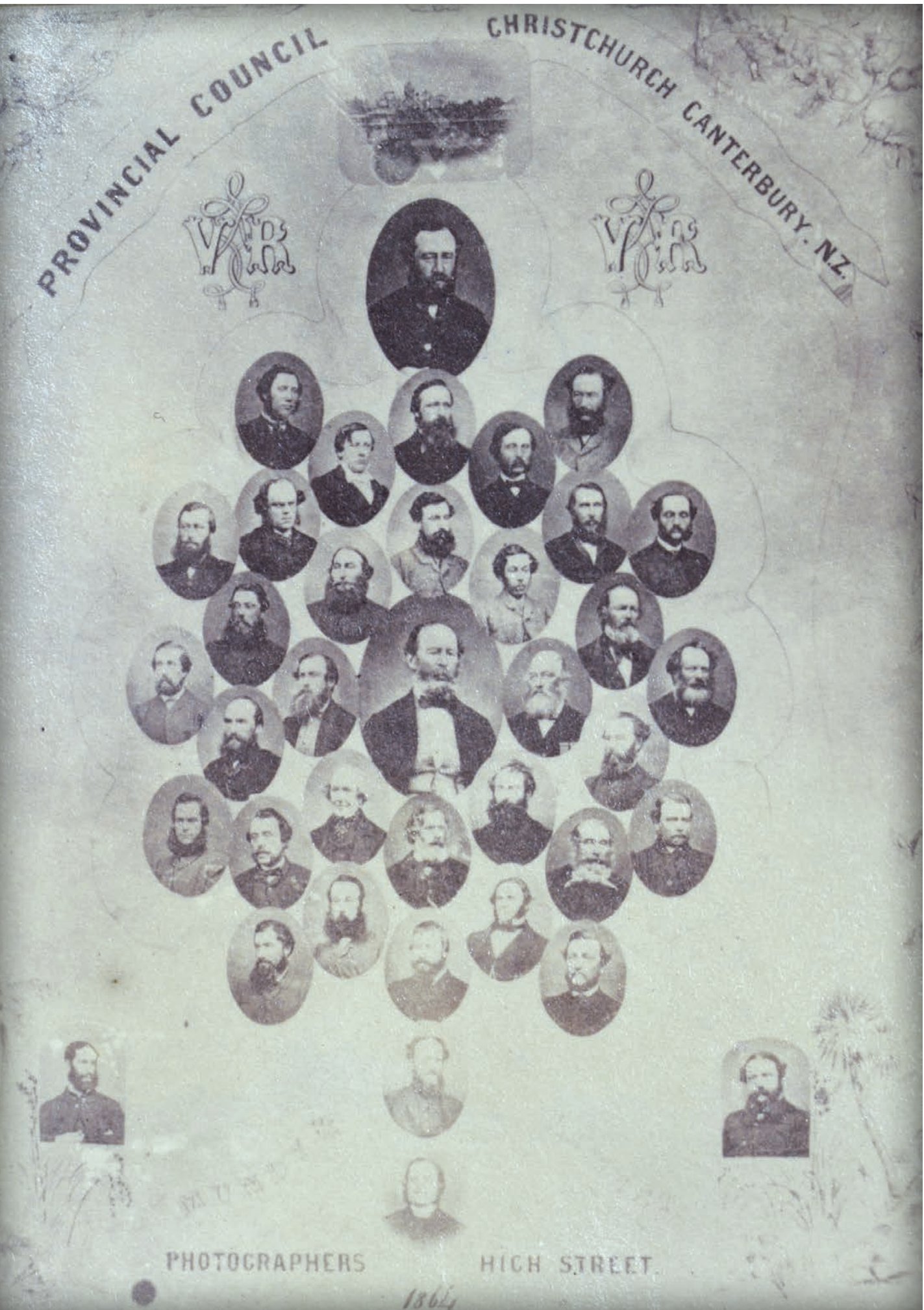
The Canterbury Provincial Council presided over Canterbury and its progress from 1853-1876. This complex was constructed for the Council in three stages between 1858 and 1865. It was designed by local architect Benjamin Mountfort in the fashionable Gothic Revival style. They are the only remaining purpose-built provincial government buildings in New Zealand. Damaged by the 2010-2011 earthquakes, the buildings are to be conserved and restored.



Canterbury Provincial Council Buildings, 14 January 1861. Ref: 1957.13.90. Dr A C Barker collection, Canterbury Museum



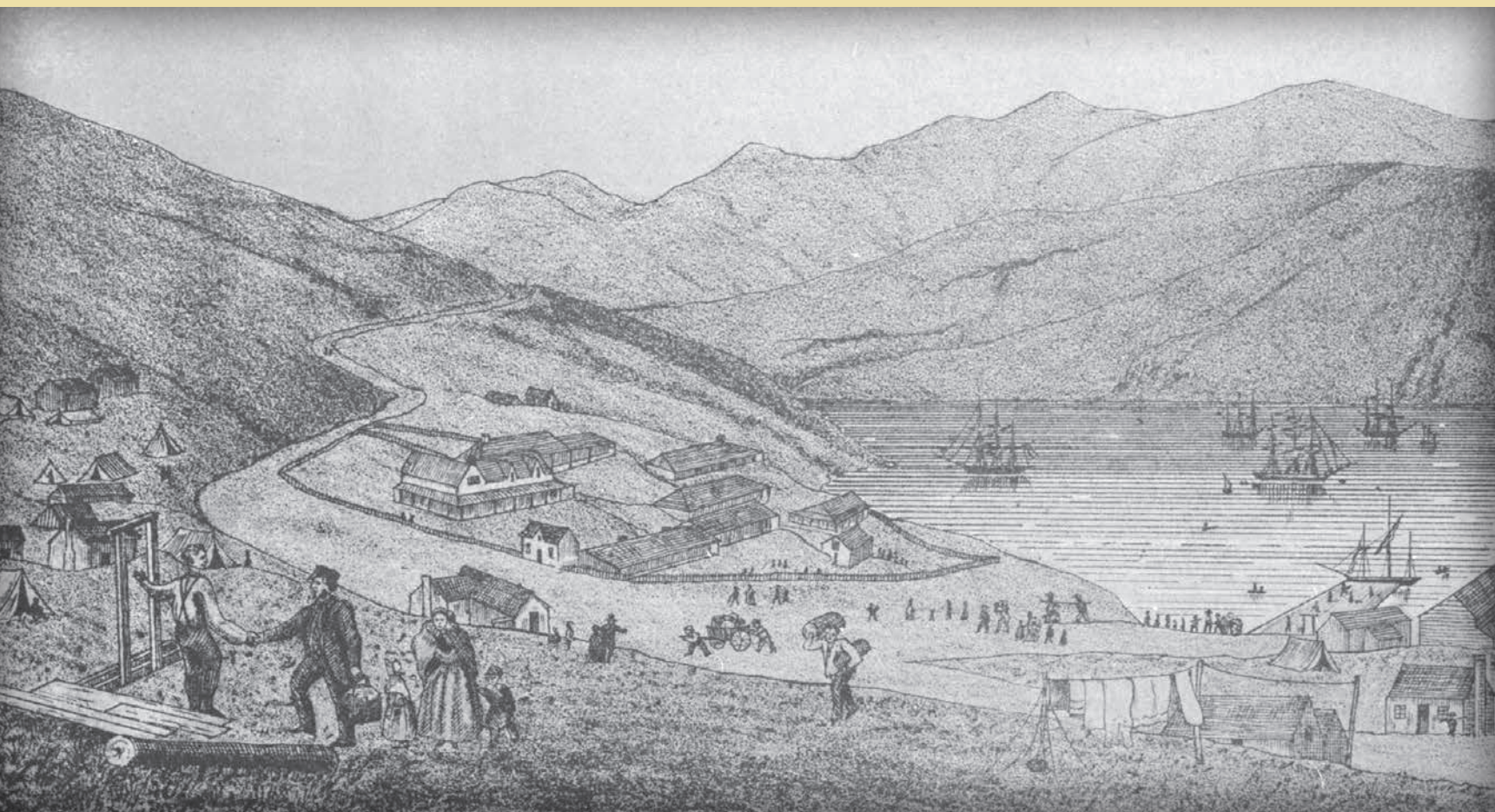
Inside the Stone Chamber. Christchurch City Council collection



The Provincial Council, Christchurch, Canterbury 1864. Ref: 1957.13.140. Dr A C Barker collection, Canterbury Museum

Settlers arrive in Canterbury

Official European settlement began in Canterbury in 1850 with the arrival of the first four organised immigrant ships from England to the Port of Lyttelton. Two years later, Canterbury became a self-governing province with Christchurch as its capital.



Early settlers arrive in Lyttelton. Christchurch City Libraries, Photo CD10-IMG0017

Wāhi Tapu status (sacred place)

At the highest point in the Central City, this site gave early prominence to the new home of the provincial government. This land has both cultural and spiritual significance for local Māori, and has sacred site status. It was the site of Puari Pā. The land and water flowing past in the Ōtākaro / Avon River was used by the tribes Waitaha, Kāti Māmoe and Ngāi Tahu for mahinga kai (the gathering of food and water and for trading). This location has Wāhi Tapu status for Ngāi Tahu.

*Kī mai ki ahau i te kōrero o tēnei whenua,
o ngā tāngata e noho nei.*

Tell me about this land and people who live here.



James Edward Fitzgerald, 1868. Ref: 1958.81.90. Dr A C Barker collection, Canterbury Museum

James Edward Fitzgerald (pictured) arrived on the *Charlotte Jane* and was the first Canterbury Pilgrim to set foot in New Zealand. Erudite and ambitious, he was elected the first Superintendent of the Provincial Government in 1853. Fitzgerald commissioned his architect friend Benjamin Mountfort to design the new provincial council buildings. The big issues at this time were the leasing and purchasing of land and access to the Port of Lyttelton. An accomplished watercolourist and writer, Fitzgerald founded *The Press* newspaper.

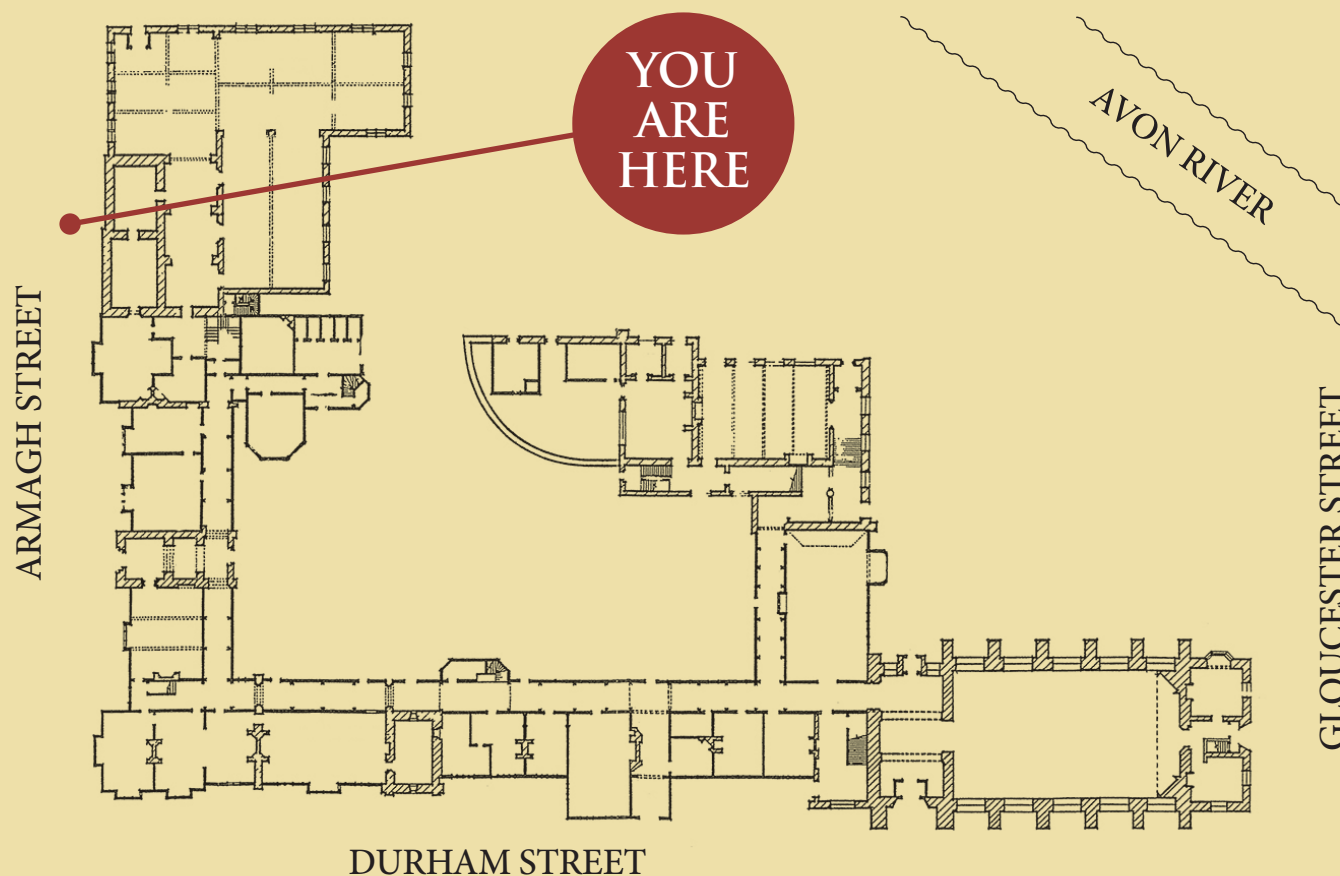
Central Government takes over

In 1876 the provincial system was replaced by a centralised governance structure managed from New Zealand's capital, Wellington. The Canterbury Provincial Council Buildings were then used as Government offices, notably for the departments of Lands and Survey and Justice.

The buildings were altered at various times through the years, including a substantial stone addition for the Land Transfer Office, which is in front of you, in 1915 and 1924. The Government continued to use the complex until the end of the 1980s. Since the early 1990s the Christchurch City Council has been custodian for the buildings. Until the 2011 earthquake, they were leased predominantly as professional rooms and for hospitality purposes.

The four Superintendents

The Canterbury Province had four Superintendents during its 23-year tenure. A Superintendent was the elected head of the provincial government. The four avenues that bound the central city are named after the four Superintendents: James FitzGerald, William Rolleston, William Moorhouse and Samuel Bealey. Three of them – FitzGerald, Rolleston and Moorhouse – are commemorated with statues on Rolleston Avenue near the Canterbury Museum.





GROWING ASPIRATIONS

Between 1859 and 1861 the Canterbury Provincial Council extended its government building with a large suite of offices along Armagh Street. Modelled on the new Canadian parliament building (begun 1859), the extension featured mansard roofs and a central stone entry tower. The tower was Christchurch's first substantial stone structure, and featured striking alternating bands of red and grey stone (a decorative technique known as constructional polychromy).

On 22 February 2011, Christchurch was hit by a destructive earthquake and the tower crumbled into the street – fortunately without loss of life. In the months that followed, the ruin was deconstructed and its stone sorted and stored to aid potential reconstruction. The building has been made weathertight with the dark metal-clad structure you see in front of you.



The Armagh Street Tower. Kete



Model of Provincial Council Buildings. Christchurch City Council collection



Armagh Street facade post-earthquake, looking west. Christchurch City Council collection



Armagh Street facade post-earthquake, looking east. Christchurch City Council collection

Courtyard and cloisters

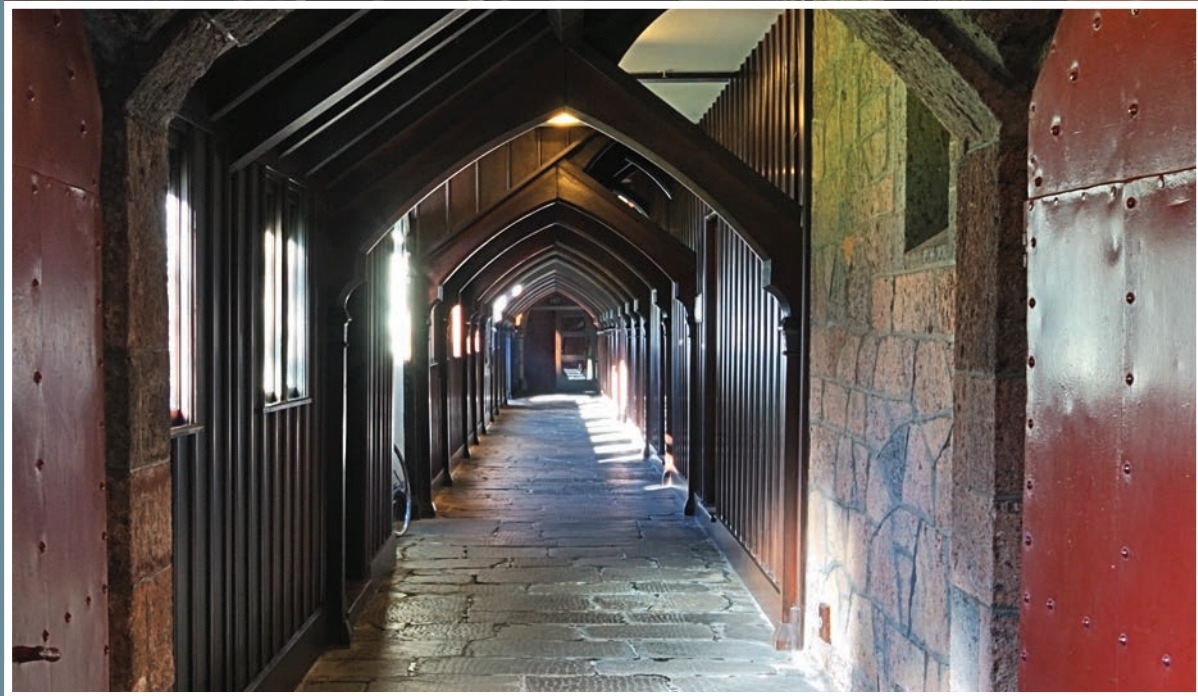
All sections of the Canterbury Provincial Council Buildings are linked by a long stone-flagged corridor that echoes the cloisters of the Gothic monastic and collegiate buildings that provided the design inspiration for architect Benjamin Mountfort. The corridor flanks a picturesque central courtyard.



The central courtyard. Christchurch City Council collection



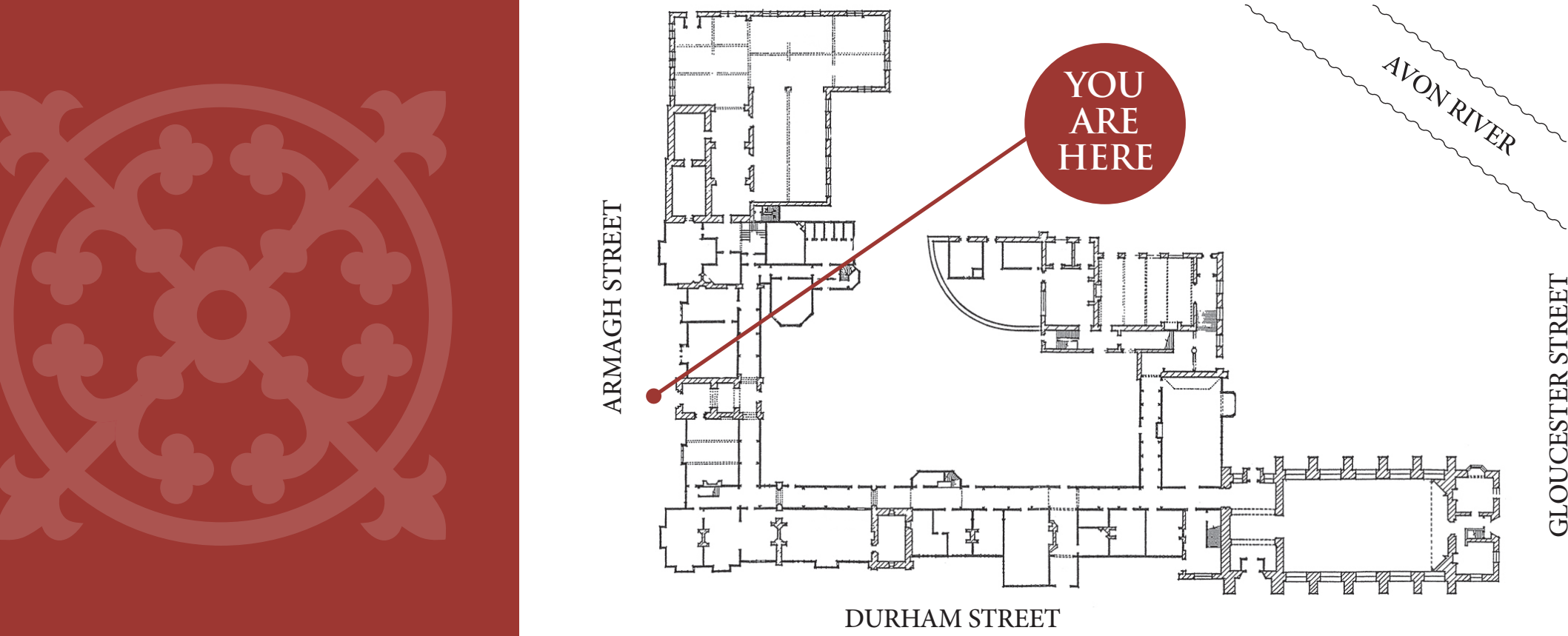
The central courtyard. Christchurch City Council collection



The Corridors pre-earthquake. Christchurch City Council collection



The Corridors post-earthquake. Jenny May





HUMBLE BEGINNINGS



Canterbury Provincial Council Buildings, 29 November 1861. Dr A C Barker collection, Canterbury Museum

In front of you are the remains of a stone tower constructed in 1865 to provide fire-proof storage for the official records of Canterbury’s provincial government.

The wooden complex on the right of the tower was completed in 1859. It once housed a debating chamber and refreshment rooms for the Provincial Council, and offices for the various departments of provincial government.

Compare this humble building with the much grander building to the left of the tower, built later in 1861. Canterbury was changing rapidly, with a booming economy attracting new settlers and business. The expanding administration needed new offices, and the contrasting building styles reflect their growing confidence in this far-flung province.



Salvaged stone from the deconstructed Durham Street Tower.



Durham Street elevation with 1865 stone tower. The blue line indicates the position of the original gable, pictured below.



Gable that abutted Durham Street Tower.

Hidden history

This gable was hidden behind a layer of stone for 150 years, before an earthquake revealed its true form.

The 1865 stone tower covering the gable was badly damaged in the 2010-2011 Canterbury earthquakes. Although the tower didn’t collapse, it had to be carefully deconstructed to a safe level. Then a

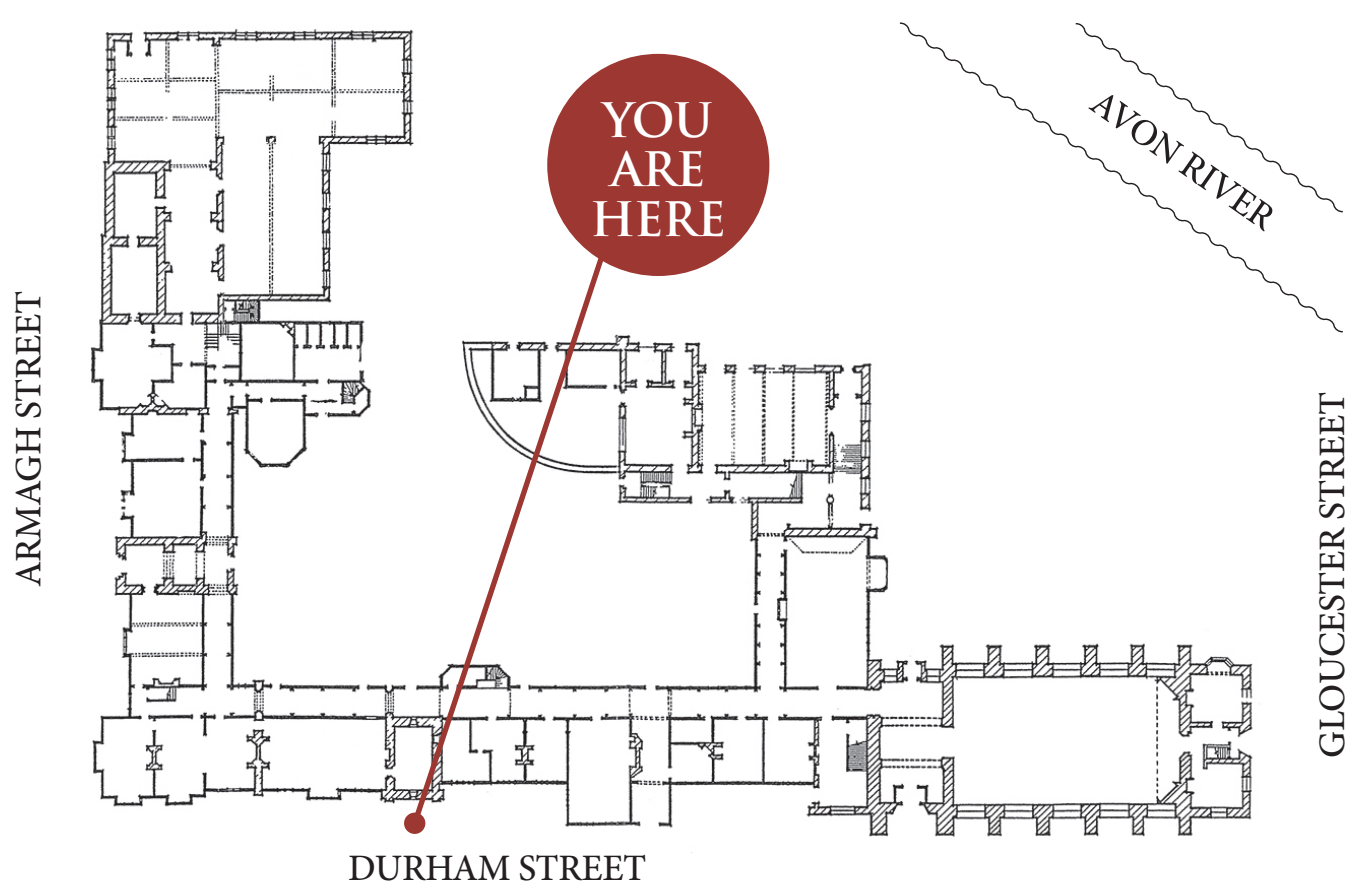
temporary roof was built over the remains. In the deconstruction process, the original exterior wall of the 1859 timber building was discovered.

A travelling clock tower

A cast iron clock tower was manufactured for the provincial council buildings in 1859, but proved too heavy for its intended location and was put into storage. Nearly 40 years later, it was re-erected at the corner of High and Manchester Streets to commemorate the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria’s reign. In 1930 the Jubilee Clock Tower was relocated to Victoria Street, where you can see it today.



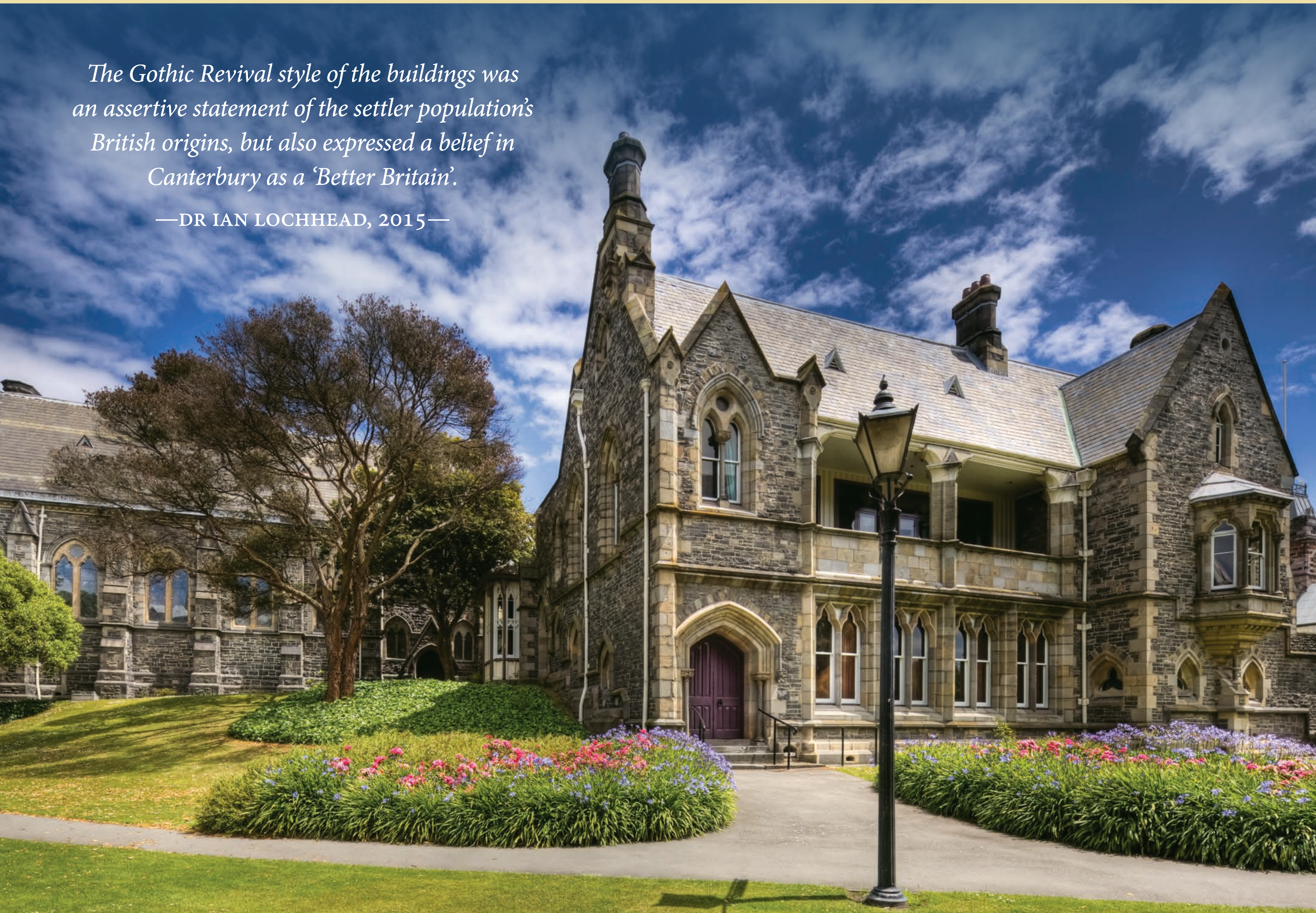
The Jubilee Clock Tower. Kete





TRANSPLANTED DREAMS

*New Zealand's most outstanding example of Gothic Revival,
the Canterbury Provincial Council Buildings, set the architectural character
for 19th century Christchurch.*

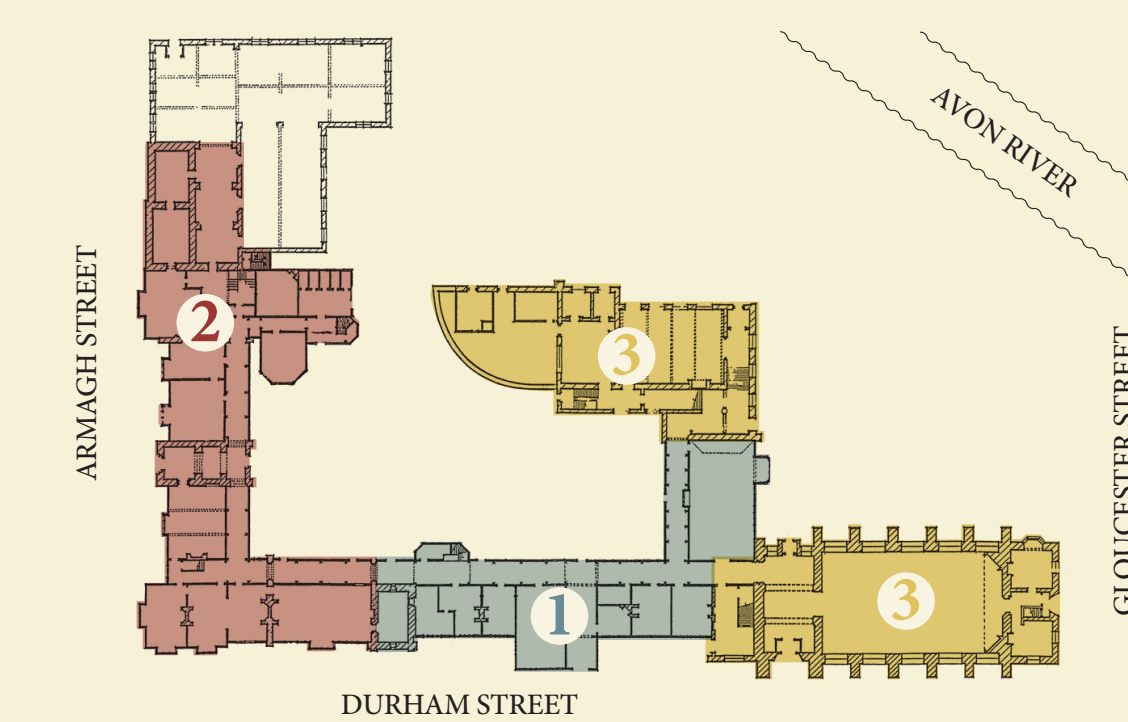


*The Gothic Revival style of the buildings was
an assertive statement of the settler population's
British origins, but also expressed a belief in
Canterbury as a 'Better Britain'.*

—DR IAN LOCHHEAD, 2015—

Commissioned by Superintendent James Fitzgerald, and designed by Benjamin Mountfort, the Provincial Council Buildings rivalled any government buildings in the British Empire.

Design and build timeline



The buildings were built in three stages, reflecting the early growth of the colonial settlement of Canterbury.

- Stage one (1858-1859): The foundation stone for the timber section was laid on 6 January 1858. This stage included the Timber Council Chamber.
- Stage two (1859-1861): This stage included the Armagh Street Stone Tower.
- Stage three (1864-1865): Completion of the Stone Chamber and Bellamy's refreshment rooms on the river front.

Gothic revival evolution

From the first modest timber buildings of 1858-1859 to the splendour of the Stone Council Chamber, a period of only seven years elapsed – a vivid architectural illustration of the rapid progress of colonial Canterbury.

Before the city grew around the Canterbury Provincial Council Buildings, they stood in stark contrast to the landscape – a reflection of the colonists' confidence and ambitions for Canterbury's future.

*By far the noblest and most instructive buildings
which we have yet seen in this part of the world.*

—THE PRESS, 1863—



Provincial Council Buildings c1860 viewed from the Worcester Street Bridge.
Courtesy Dr A C Barker collection, Canterbury Museum

Benjamin Woolfield Mountfort (1825-1898)

Mountfort was born in Birmingham in England and was articled to London architect Richard Cromwell Carpenter. Mountfort immigrated to New Zealand with his extended

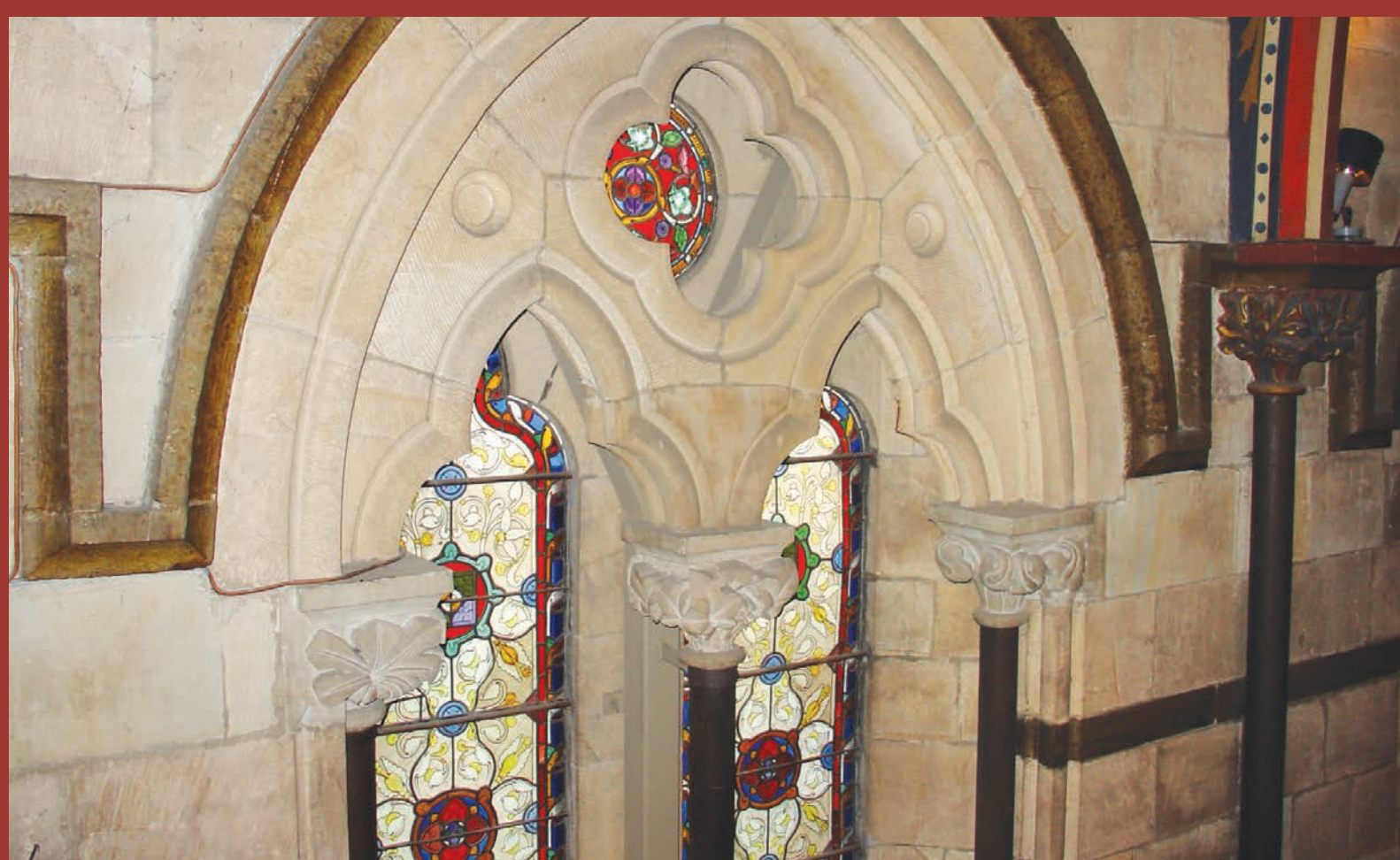


Benjamin Mountfort ca 1860.
Dr A C Barker collection, Canterbury Museum

family arriving in Lyttelton in 1850 on *Charlotte Jane*, the first of the Canterbury Association ships. He set the Gothic Revival style of 19th century Christchurch, designing many of the colonial city's defining buildings, including key elements of Christ's College, Canterbury Museum and the former Canterbury College (known today as the Arts Centre of Christchurch).

"Mountfort's buildings played a major part in establishing the architectural character of Christchurch and gave permanent visual expression to the social and religious ideals of the Canterbury Association. Among New Zealand architects of the nineteenth century, few can equal Mountfort's dedication to his profession, and none can surpass the standards of design he maintained during a career of 50 years."

— Ian J. Lochhead, 'Mountfort, Benjamin Woolfield',
Dictionary of New Zealand Biography. Te Ara

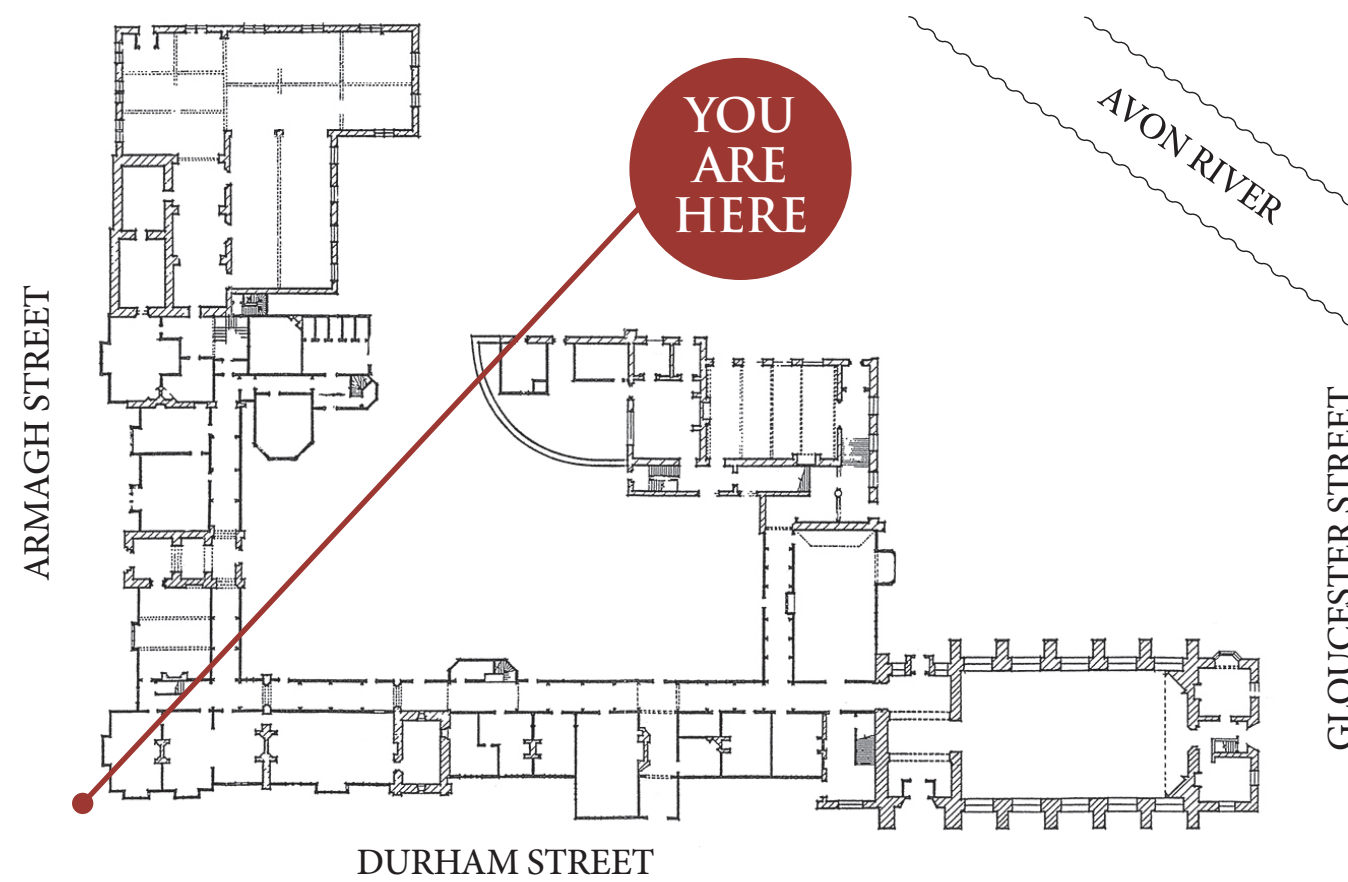


The stonemason's legacy

The skill of stonemason William Brassington was revealed in the carved stone images of Queen Victoria, Prince Albert, Florence Nightingale, and a selection of fauna and flora, including a bear pushing through foliage. The stone areas of the buildings also contained wonderful detail in the form of stained glass windows, encaustic tiling, and stencilled and painted timber work. Many objects were retrieved from the rubble following the February 2011 earthquake.

Protecting our history

This complex was recognised as vitally important and worthy of protection as early as 1928 when the Canterbury Provincial Buildings Vesting Act was passed to protect the stone sections. The buildings and courtyard are now protected, with all work requiring the approval of the Minister of Conservation.



Earthquake damage

The February 2011 Canterbury earthquake destroyed the Stone Council Chamber and Armagh Street Tower and left other stone sections badly damaged. The timber areas, though damaged, survived remarkably well. Careful deconstruction has ensured that many of the architectural elements and detail have been able to be retrieved and stored until they can be conserved.



STONE CHAMBER: A GOTHIC REVIVAL ICON

No other public building in the nineteenth century New Zealand equalled the inventiveness, richness of effect, scholarship and attention to details found in the Stone Council Chamber.

—DR IAN LOCHHEAD (*A Dream of Spires*, 1999, p117)—



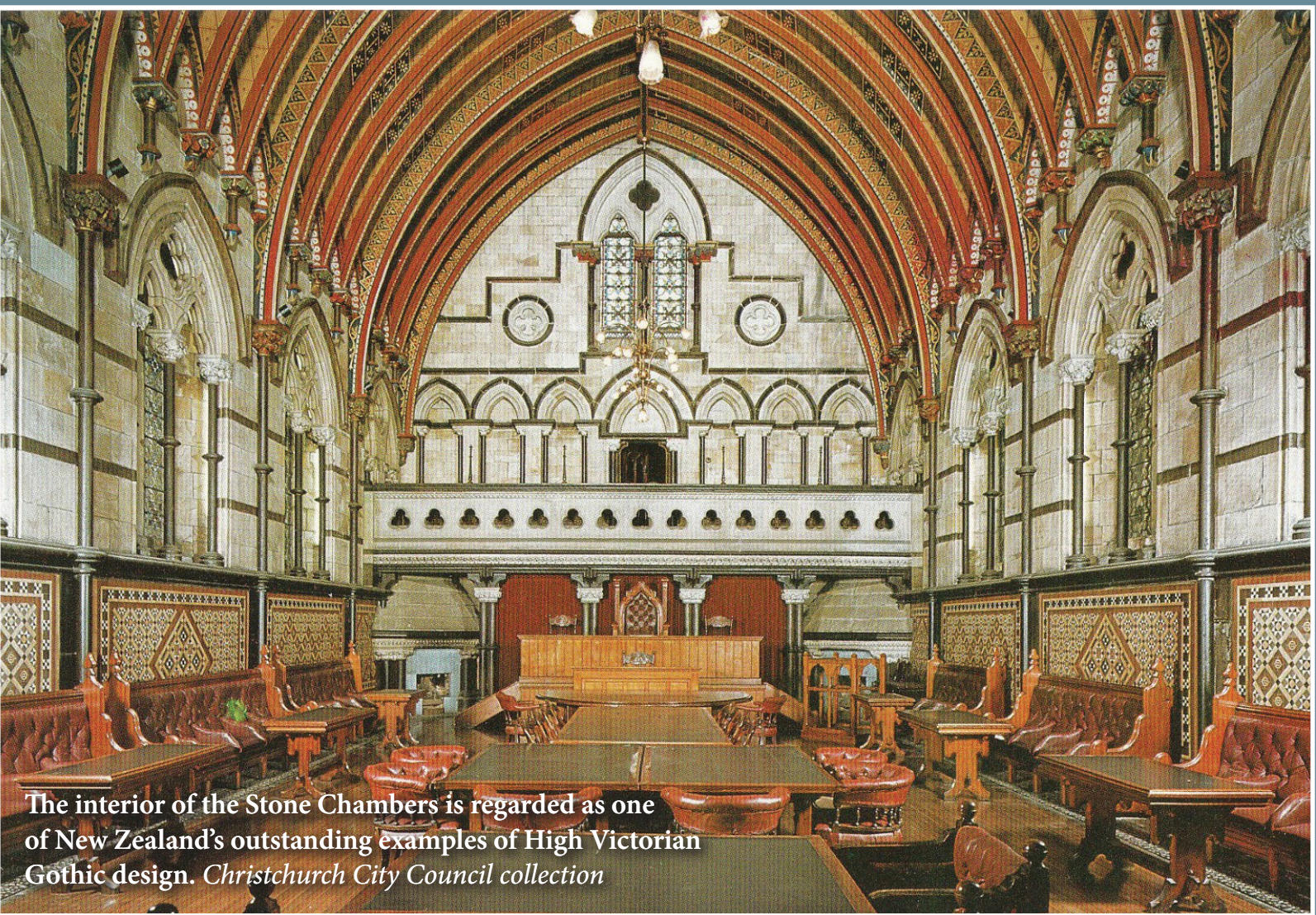
Canterbury Provincial Council Buildings, 19 January 1871. Dr A C Barker Collection, Canterbury Museum

Canterbury’s economy was booming in the 1860s, and that confidence was reflected in the design of the Stone Chamber. Designed in Gothic Revival style, architect Benjamin Mountfort’s grand extension acknowledges the city’s new sense of permanency—and the increased number of provincial councillors.

The stone was quarried from various Canterbury locations. The distinctive blue-grey stone came from Halswell quarry, the sandstone from Charteris Bay, and the limestone from Weka Pass.



The Stone Chamber post-earthquake. Christchurch City Council collection



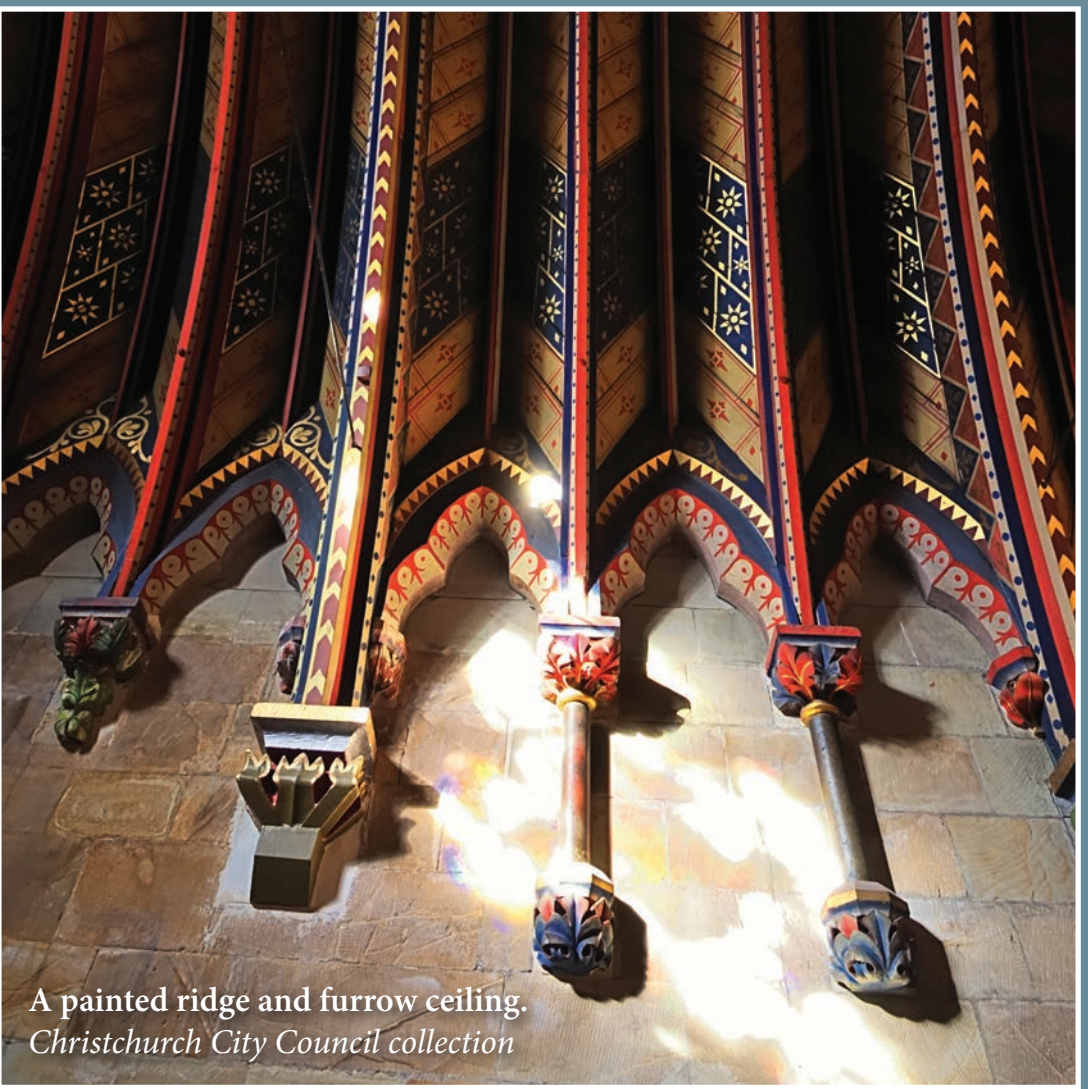
The interior of the Stone Chambers is regarded as one of New Zealand’s outstanding examples of High Victorian Gothic design. Christchurch City Council collection

Outstanding architectural space

The interior of the Stone Chamber was regarded as one of New Zealand’s outstanding examples of High Victorian Gothic design. The interior was severely damaged when the building collapsed in the February 2011 earthquake. These images show its splendour; the vision of architect Mountfort executed by craftsmen such as William Brassington and John Calcott St Quentin.

Stencilled and painted timber ceiling

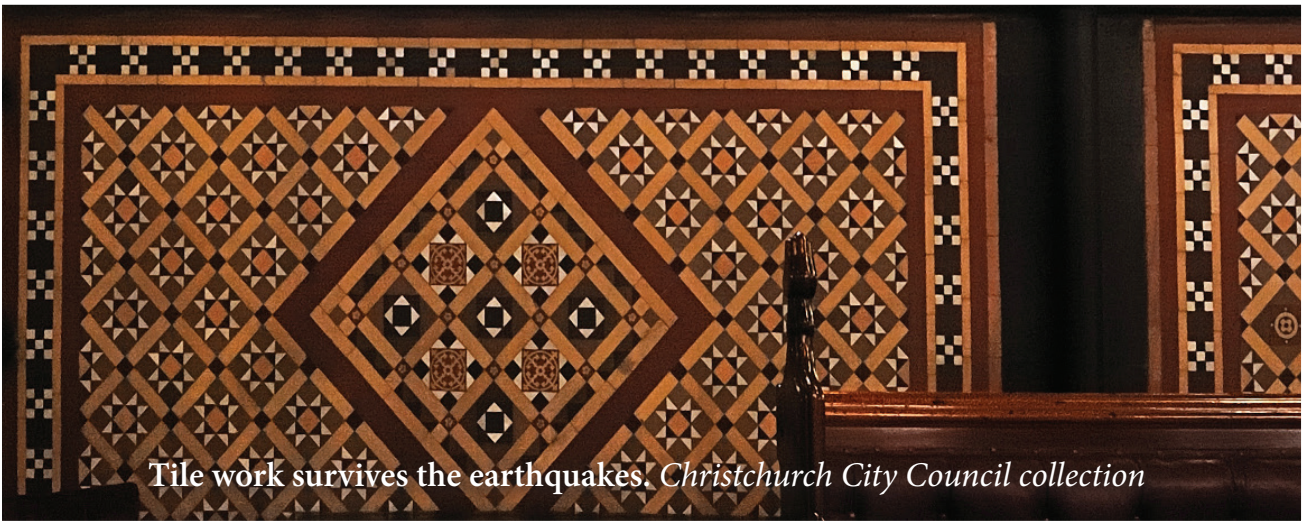
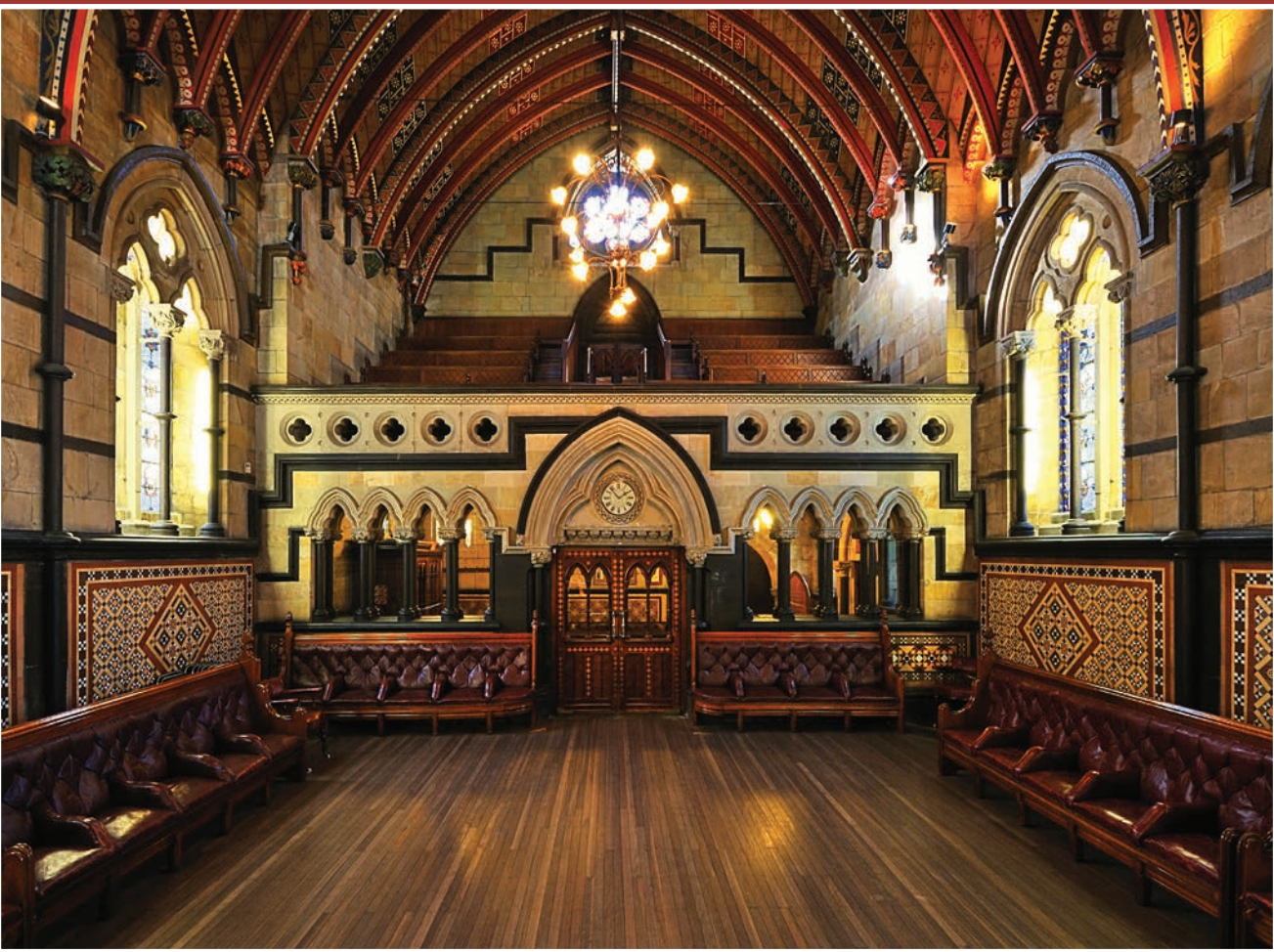
Artist John Calcott St Quentin rendered the ceiling’s intricate design from a stencil provided by Mountfort. Completed early in 1867, the red and gold of this richly-coloured ceiling perfectly complemented the Gothic Revival architecture.



A painted ridge and furrow ceiling. Christchurch City Council collection

Encaustic tiling survives

The lower west and east wall surfaces of the Chamber were lined with panels of coloured encaustic tiles in geometric patterns. The entry vestibule also has encaustic tiles on the floor. Remarkably the wall and floor tiles remain largely intact, despite the collapse of the Stone Chamber.



Tile work survives the earthquakes. Christchurch City Council collection



Stonework in the Canterbury Provincial Council Buildings. Inset: Image of William Brassington. Christchurch City Council collection

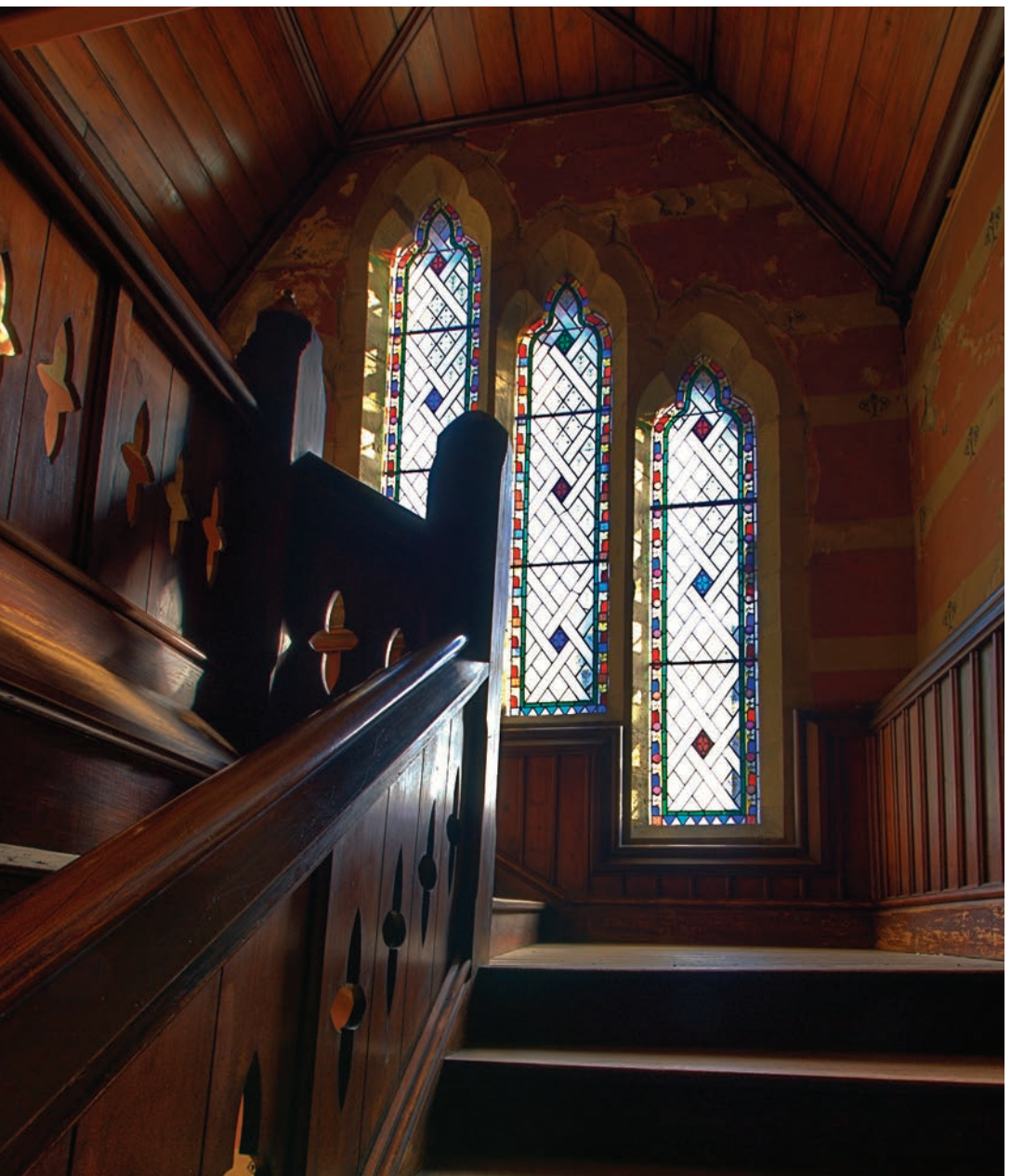
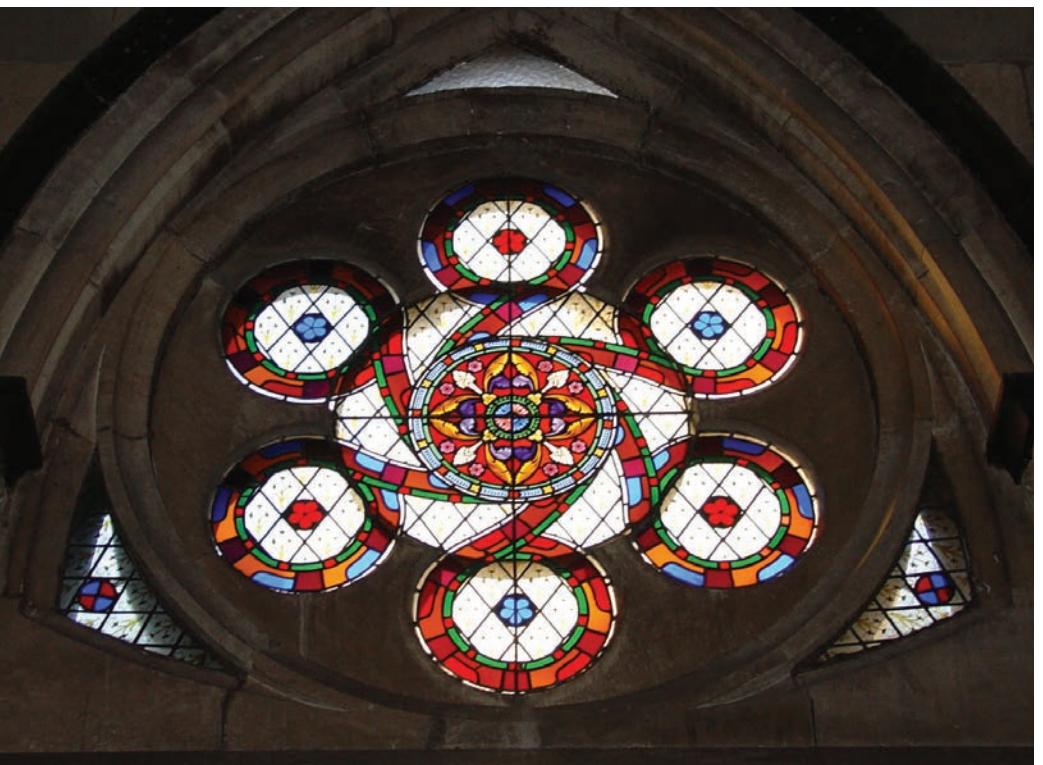
Stonemason’s triumph of ornately carved stone

Stonemason William Brassington was commissioned to complete the decorative stonework, comprising dozens of foliated capitals and corbels. Every corbel adorning the ceiling and windows was unique, with squirrels, frogs and snails hidden among the foliage of exotic and native trees. Ten faces also appeared, including Queen Victoria, St Quentin, Superintendent Fitzgerald and the stonemason himself. A considerable number of the corbels and elements of carved detail have been retrieved and are in storage.



Stained glass windows to inspire

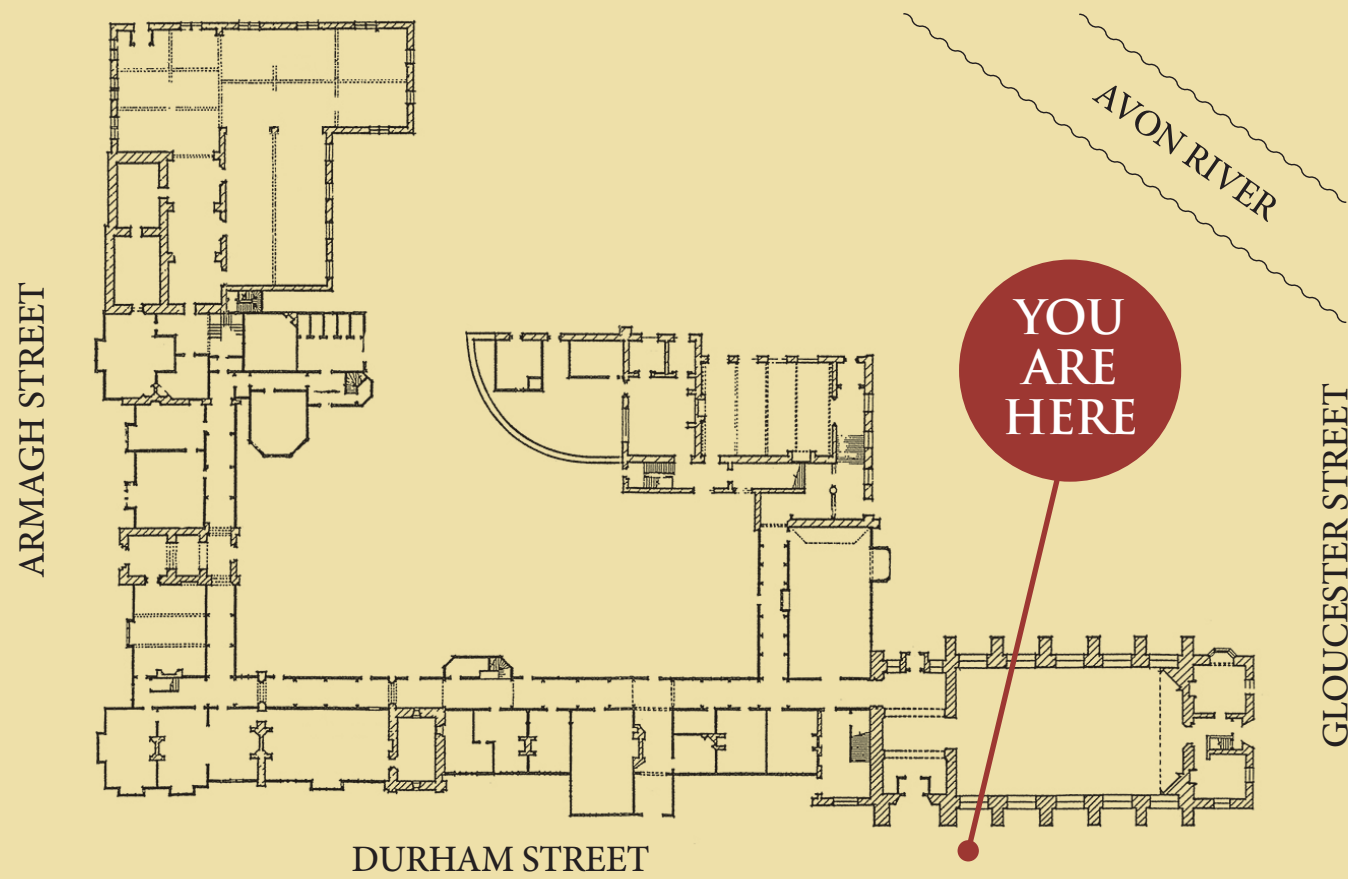
Many of the stained glass windows were etched with homilies and texts from Ecclesiasticus and English writers such as Pope and Swift—possibly as inspiration for the city’s founding politicians. Made by London’s Lavers and Barraud, these superb glass panels were destroyed in the 2011 earthquake.



A show of hands

The left corbel shows the strong hand of a worker, and the other a finely-shaped scholar’s hand. A symbol of the combined talent and skill needed to create such beauty.

Taunting the reporters’ gallery from above is a playful carving of a toad and monkey. The implication being that the ‘Fourth Estate’ was as “sly as monkeys and slippery as toads”.





BELLAMY’S AND THE TIMBER CHAMBER



The Timber Council Chamber features a soaring arched ceiling in native kauri and rimu. Christchurch City Council collection



Bay window. Christchurch City Council collection

Timber Council Chamber

Modelled on Medieval English manorial halls, the Timber Council Chamber features a soaring arched ceiling in native kauri and rimu. Architect Benjamin Mountfort was deft at using timber for both structure and decoration. Galleries at either end catered for the press and public – or ‘stranger’s gallery’. Long cloister-like corridors link this impressive chamber with the other buildings.

Canterbury’s provincial councillors first met here in 1859. Five years later, numbers had grown to 35 which required the building of the larger Stone Council Chamber.

The bay window to the south east end of the Timber Chamber is an architectural gem with timber tracery, arches and detail that one would more commonly expect to find in stone.



Bay window exterior. Christchurch City Council collection



Bellamy's pre-earthquake. iStockphoto

Echoing Westminster

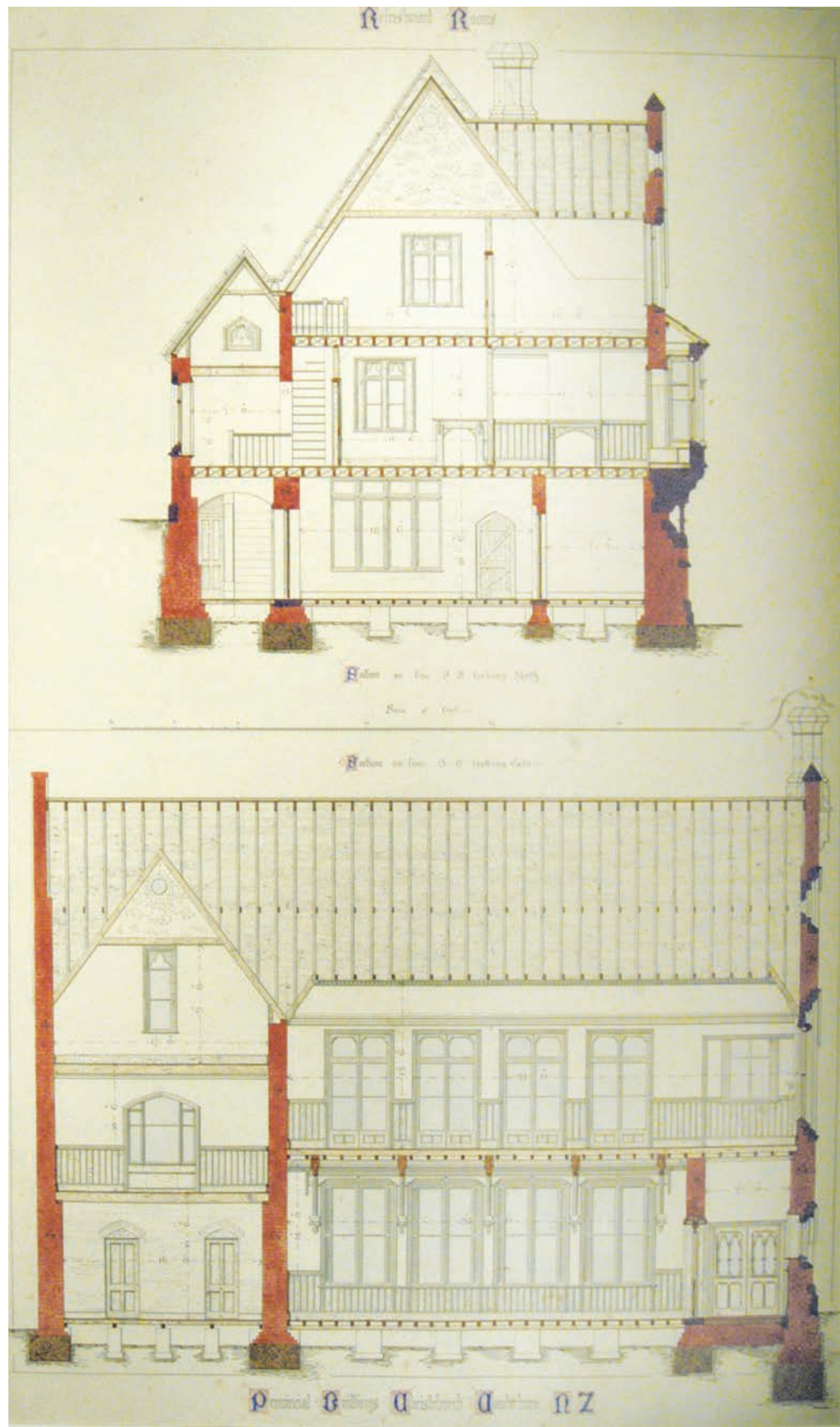
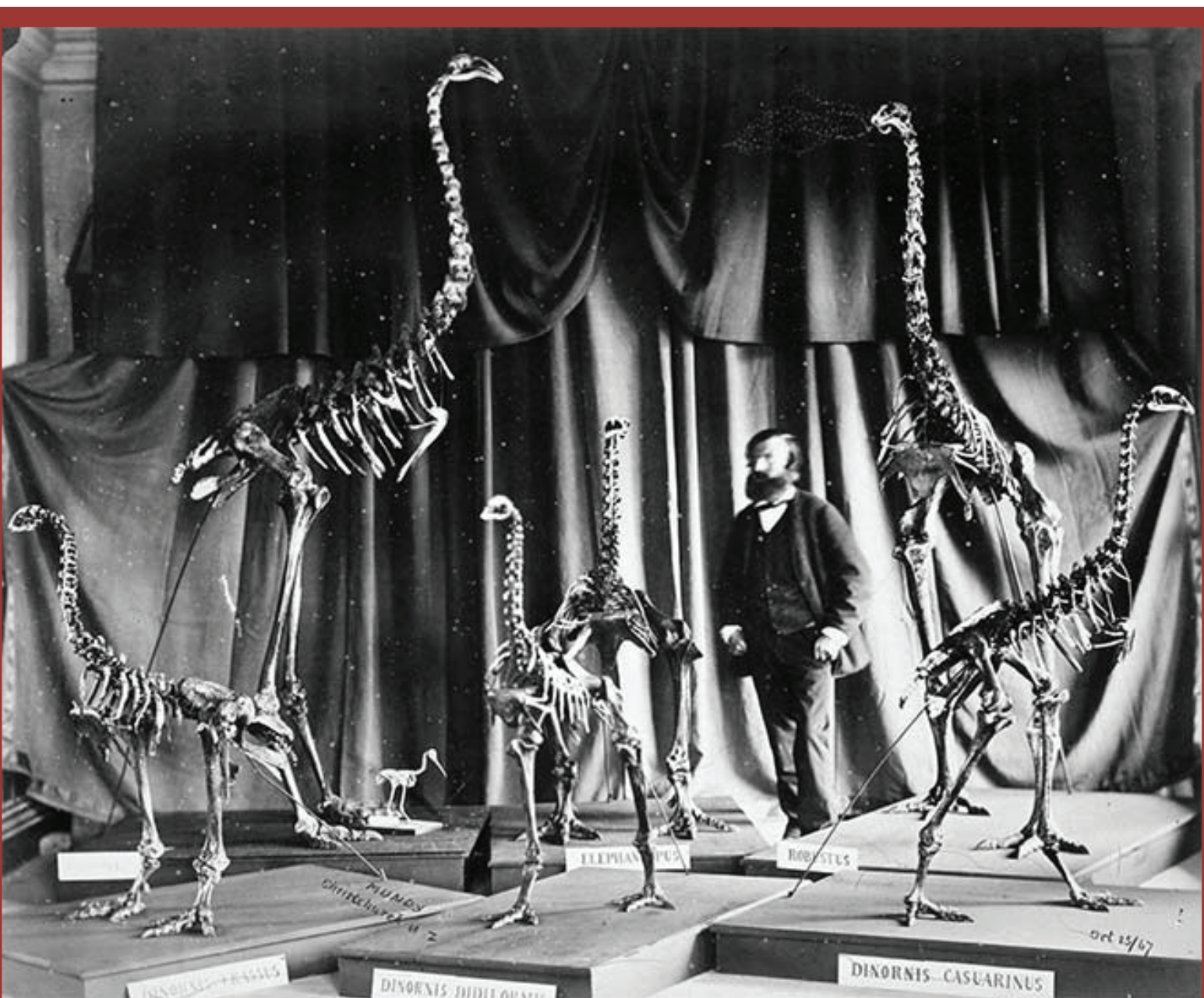
Bellamy’s was the provincial Councillors’ refreshment rooms named after Bellamy’s, the parliamentary refreshment rooms at the British Houses of Parliament at Westminster, London. Originally Bellamy’s was a small timber building which was partly relocated in 1864 to the north east end of the courtyard. This made way for a new Bellamy’s constructed in stone.

Described as the “pleasantest room in Canterbury”, architect Benjamin Mountfort designed the 1864 Bellamy’s wing in Gothic Revival. It features a complex series of asymmetrical forms over three levels, including a kitchen, housekeeper’s quarters, and dining area on the ground floor with large wooden beams reinforced with steel. The reading and smoking room on the first floor has French doors and an east-facing balcony overlooking the grounds and the Avon-Ōtākaro River.

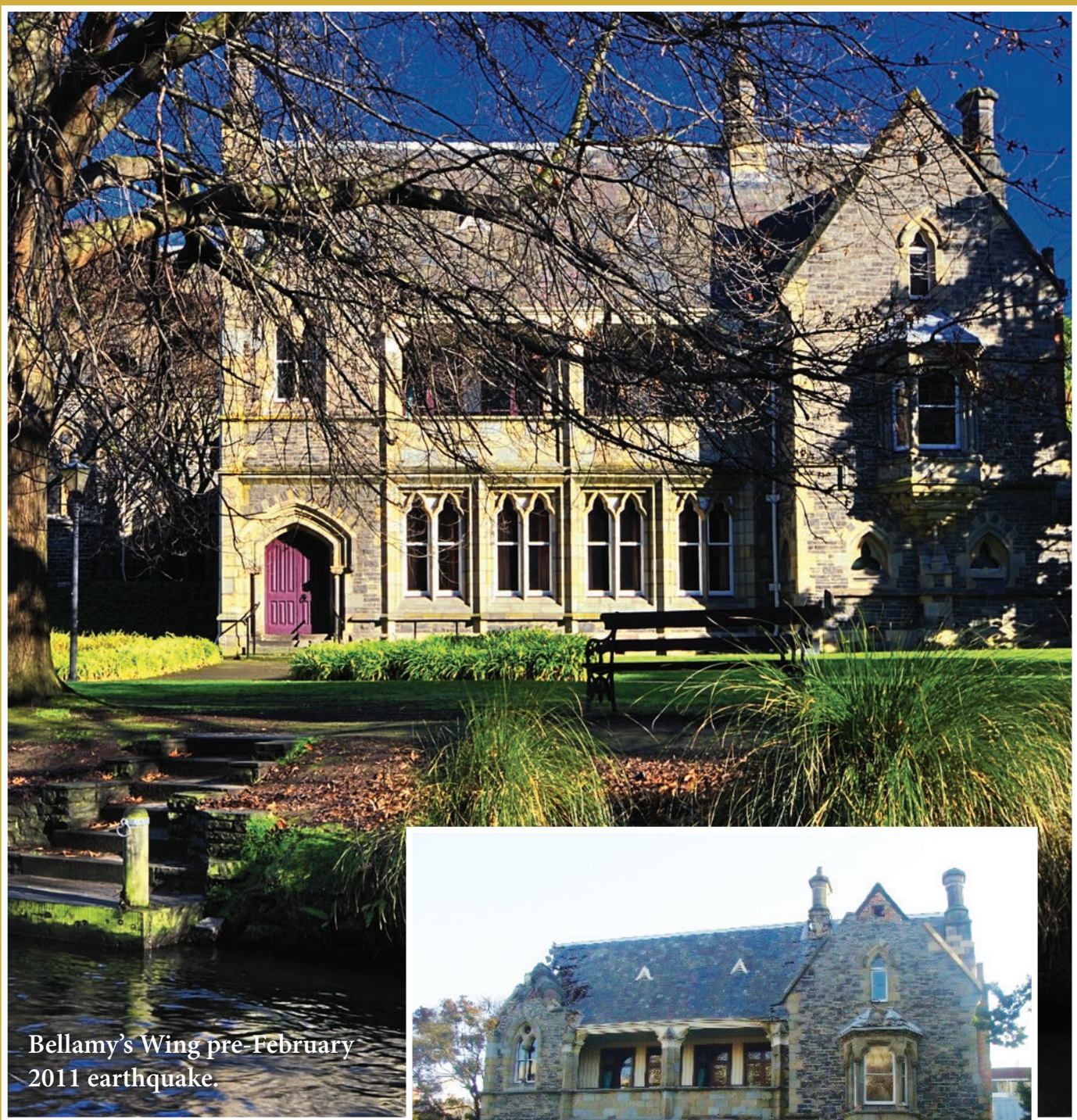
Bellamy’s – first home of Canterbury Museum

This photograph (right) shows Julius von Haast, the founder and first director of Canterbury Museum, dwarfed by a collection of Moa skeletons. The photograph was taken in the Smoking Room at Bellamy’s, which served as the first display space for the museum, between 1867 and 1870.

Auckland City Libraries – Tāmaki Pātaka Kōrero, Sir George Grey Special Collections
Reference: 589-76 Photograph by Daniel Louis Mundy



Above: Section elevations looking north and east featuring the refreshment rooms of the Canterbury Provincial Council Buildings. Benjamin Mountfort, Architectural Plan, Canterbury University



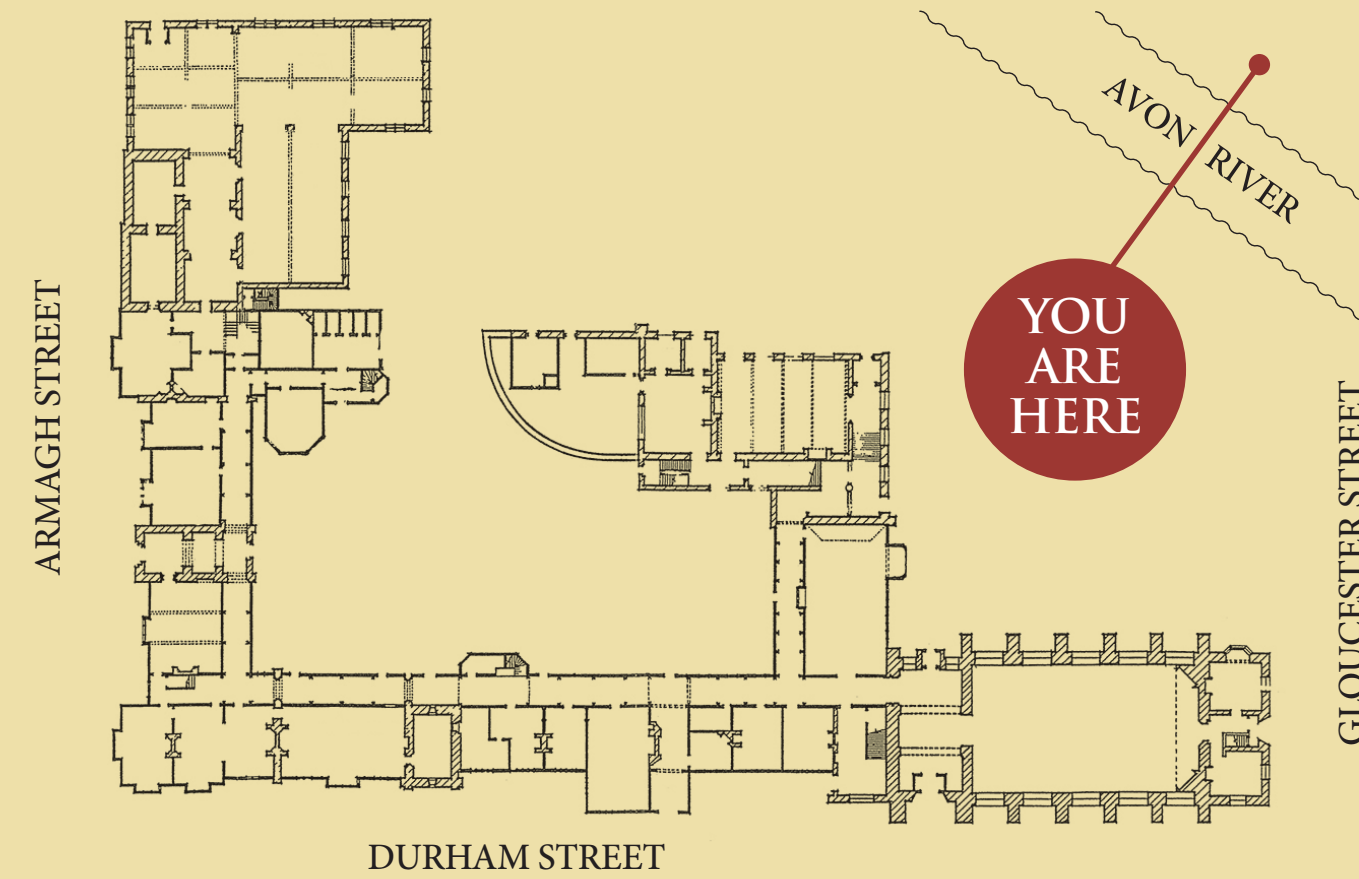
Bellamy's Wing pre-February 2011 earthquake



Bellamy's Wing in June 2011.

A survivor

During the 2010-2011 Canterbury earthquakes, Mountfort’s use of steel reinforced (flitched) timber beams, coupled with the significant seismic strengthening undertaken in the 1990s, meant the Bellamy’s Wing was less damaged than other stone parts of the complex.





SAVING CANTERBURY'S HISTORY

Architect Benjamin Mountfort's design skills extended beyond the buildings, to the interior and fittings for the Canterbury Provincial Council Buildings. He designed the Speaker's Chair and Members' Benches, and ordered the double-faced clock from G Coates of Christchurch.

The 2010-2011 Canterbury earthquakes destroyed large portions of this legacy of Victorian Gothic Revival architecture, built between 1858-1865.

Christchurch City Council has completed a project to stabilise and protect the building; deconstructing severely damaged areas and retrieving and archiving material for future restoration.

World Monuments Fund lends a helping hand

In 2012 the Canterbury Provincial Council Buildings were placed on the World Monuments Watch to draw attention to the destruction caused by the earthquake and the complex issues surrounding rebuilding efforts. Remarkably important elements of the Stone Chamber emerged from the rubble.

World Monuments Fund (WMF), in partnership with American Express, supported restoration of key pieces of furniture retrieved from the site of the Stone Chamber for exhibit and to preserve the enduring memory of Canterbury's historic buildings.

WMF is the leading independent organisation devoted to saving the world's treasured places. The World Monuments Watch, its advocacy programme, calls international attention to threatened cultural heritage sites around the world.



Damage to the Stone Chamber following the 2011 earthquake. Christchurch City Council collection



Inside the Stone Chamber - showing the double-sided clock, one of only five in existence. Christchurch City Council collection



The Speaker's Chair. Underground Overground Archaeology

The Speaker's Chair

This Gothic revival-inspired chair lay trapped under ceiling beams and roof rubble for ten months before it was retrieved. Conservators cleaned, and re-turned, two decorative wooden plugs. The chair's commanding central arch is surrounded by four wooden standards or pinnacles, and these were all conserved, along with the maroon leather upholstery.

Designed by architect Benjamin Mountfort for the Speaker of the House, the chair was last officially used by the Honorable Henry John Tancred who was speaker from 1866 until the provincial system was dissolved in 1876.



Conservator at work. Emily Fryer Conservation



The double-sided clock in the rubble following the February 2011 earthquake. Jenny May



Jubilant Simon Construction building staff, Darryl McIntosh and Karl Todd, retrieve the clock from the rubble. Simon Construction

The double-faced clock

It was a triumphant moment when workers removed the double-faced clock from the rubble in remarkable condition. A herologist has cleaned and repaired the clock's movement mechanism and gear trains—and the clock surrounds, hands and faces.

Crafted by G Coates and Co of Christchurch and London, this clock is one of only five in existence. Mr Coates moved from London to Christchurch in 1861 and established Coates and Co, Manufacturing Jewellers, Watchmakers and Opticians in Colombo Street. The clock was installed in decorative stone work at the northern end of the Stone Chamber.

Elected Members' Benches

Some of these benches took the full force of the earthquake, others received only minor scratches. Of the eight elected members' benches, five have been conserved. Conservators have had to replace severely damaged or missing parts, clean and conserve timber frames, and retouch and consolidate the leather and backing. Designed by Mountfort, these chairs featured clever pullout drawers under the seats to store members' paperwork.



Emily Fryer Conservation



Jenny May



Emily Fryer Conservation

