

Heritage Item 8

Corwar Lodge



Location

Address:	Rakaia – Barrhill – Methven Road
Co-ordinates:	Northing 5726883 , Easting 2415706
Legal Description:	Lot 1 DP 29828
Owner:	Ashburton District Council

Purpose

Current Use:	Museum
Original/Past Uses:	Gate House

Heritage Significance and Category

Heritage Significance:	Physical; Historic; Cultural
Heritage NZ:	Not registered
Ashburton DC:	Category A

Site Assessment

Assessed by:	Arlene Baird, Davie Lovell-Smith Ltd.
Date Assessed:	20 November 2014

Detail

Description:

Corwar Lodge was built in the 1870's by John Cathcart Wason, owner of Corwar Estate and creator of Barrhill Village.

It is a small building, approximately 46 sqm in size and is constructed of concrete with a hipped slate roof and central chimney. The concrete walls are approximately 30cm thick, providing good insulation. Cement for the building was brought into Lake Forsythe, on the southern coast of Banks Peninsula. The roof was originally slate, then corrugated iron. During WW2 the iron was stripped from the roof and the building fell into a state of disrepair. By the late 1960s all that remained was the walls, chimney and part of the roof. Repair work and restoration was undertaken in the early 1970s.

The Lodge has four rooms – you enter straight into the living room through the only external door; this leads into a small pantry to the left and a small bedroom to the right. Further through the bedroom you enter into another small room. The internal ceiling is finished in tongue and groove timber, which was constructed as part of the refurbishments. There are five windows, all are center-opening small-pane arched windows and are in very good condition. The chimney was replaced in 2013 following damage. The internal layout remains as original; however the coal range in the center of the house was sourced from elsewhere during the renovations, to fit with the era of the property.

History:

Corwar Lodge was built as a gatehouse to Corwar Homestead, a large mansion that Wason had built overlooking the Rakaia River. The Gatekeepers job was to open gates and direct visitors to the house. This was a formal entrance only, a workman's entrance existed further along the road. Wason had rigged up a bell in the homestead which could summons the gatekeeper anytime day or night.

John Cathcart Wason was born in Ayrshire, Scotland in 1848 and immigrated to New Zealand in 1868 aged 20. In February 1869 Wason bought the Lendon Run of 20,000 acres (1250 of freehold) on the south bank of the Rakaia River and renamed it Corwar after his home in Scotland. He wanted to create a model estate and planted oaks, limes, walnuts and poplars to create a British appearance. He created a mid-sized freehold estate with a large mansion overlooking the river complete with this gate lodge. Part of this estate was a model village, Barrhill, which was to mimic the British ideal of a squire in his manor house with the workers housed nearby.

Corwar Lodge was built in the 1870s and lived in by many families over the years, including the Blains, the Morrisons, the Bishops, the Millars, the Blackmores, the Jollys and the Pauls. The last family left in 1935 and the small lodge fell into disrepair over the war years. Mr Ron Mauger, a Christchurch builder, began restoration in 1970 at his own expense – he was the grandson of the Blackmores who lived there for a time. He received financial help with the restoration from Mr and Mrs Mark Curd whose father was a gardener for Mr Wason in 1879 and lived in the lodge. Mr Mauger replaced the roof, fitted leadlight windows and lined the ceiling with tongue and groove. At one point the roof was replaced with a decramastic roof, which was believed by some to be inappropriate and was re-laid with slate. Mr Mauger completed the restoration in 1972 and it led to the formation of the Barrhill Corwar Lodge Preservation Society.

The building is now the Corwar Lodge Museum (open by arrangement) and is furnished with items of the era. The museum was opened on March 30, 1979 - a plaque states that Mr Muldoon, then Prime Minister opened the museum, however his plane was delayed by bad weather and it was instead opened by C.C.A. McLachlan, MP (who actually donated the land and building to Ashburton DC).

Detail

The plaque on the building also bears a quote from the Wason family crypt at Barrhill which reads “*Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might (Eccles 9:10).*”

At its peak Wason’s Barrhill Village was quite prosperous comprising of the Church, school, schoolhouse, a bakery, blacksmith, post office, boiling works (for mutton), store, inn and about 15 cottages. When the railway bypassed Barrhill in the 1890s, the village started to decline and Wason sold up in 1900 and moved back to Scotland. His mansion burned down shortly after that. Over time most of the original buildings in the village have been lost, with just the three concrete buildings remaining in Barrhill and the Corwar Gate Lodge. These buildings are now owned by the District Council and looked after by the Barrhill Village Preservation Society.

Notable Features:

Concrete construction; internal layout with single central chimney; arched windows; location.

Condition:

The lodge has undergone numerous renovations and repairs over the years. It is currently set up as a museum and is kept in a relatively good state of repair. The walls are in good condition – there are some cracks visible, one obvious one above the entrance door, but not of a serious nature. The windows and frames are in good condition and are neatly painted. The chimney was replaced in 2013 and is therefore in excellent condition and there have been new gutterings and downpipes attached. Internally the building is in very good repair with a timber ceiling and a replacement fireplace.

Setting:

Corwar Lodge is located on the roadside by what was originally the entrance to Corwar Homestead. The setting of the Lodge is of high historical significance due to its purpose as the gatehouse for the homestead; also due to its group significance with the remaining concrete constructed buildings within Barrhill; also due to its links with John Cathcart Wason who owned and developed this area.



