

Whanganui District Heritage Inventory

Heritage Assessment and Statement of Significance

Item Name: **Te Rangi**

Register Item No: 475 **Class: Class B**
Address: 4 Allison Street, Durie Hill, Whanganui
Legal Description: Lot 1 Deposited Plan 50327

Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga List Number and Category (if applicable): **N/A**



View of the river-facing façade of Te Rangi, 4 Allison Street. Photo taken by S. Flutey, 27.7.2023.

Inventory Item List
Number:

Significance:

- Archaeological
- Architectural
- Cultural/Social
- Historic
- Scientific
- Technological
- Setting/Context
- Interior

Statement of Significance

Te Rangi is an important place for different segments of the community, holding architectural, historical, social and cultural significance.

Architecturally, it is a good representative example of the sort of high-quality suburban villas that wealthier families were constructing in the outskirts of Whanganui at the start of the twentieth century, a time of considerable wealth and growth for the town. An early inhabitant was Herbert Dymock, inaugural clerk of Waitotara County Council, and his family.

The last full-time residents, Anthony and Gita Brooke, made the house a centre for the peace movement through their charity, Peace Through Unity.¹ For several decades the house has been used for advocacy around non-violence, indigenous rights and resolution of armed conflict. The

¹ The charity was founded under the name Peace Through Unity, and was later known as Operation Peace Through Unity. In 2011, its name was reverted to Peace Through Unity.

group's most prominent work in Whanganui was in instituting the Handspan sculpture at Pukenamu Queen's Park, the only public sculpture undertaken by prominent potter and heritage advocate Ross Mitchell-Anyon (1954-2022). For these reasons, the site has gained social, historical and cultural significance in the wider community.

Physical Description

Externally, the house and its wider setting have retained considerable integrity. Historical photographs provided by descendants of earlier owners demonstrate that little alterations have been made to the exterior. Internally, considerable alterations have been made to both living and service areas, including the removal of walls. The earlier floor layout was largely reinstated in the 1980s, but reintroduced walls are visibly more modern in decorative finish in contrast with other parts of the house.

An additional garage from the early twentieth century is also in place at the street frontage, along with a woodshed lean-to.

The house is surrounded by a well-established garden and mature trees making it difficult to view from Allison Street. The garden on the north-west elevation drops off to the edge of a steep hill, however, allowing substantial views of central Whanganui and upriver towards Aramoho.

Historical Significance

None Low Moderate High Outstanding

Whether the place is associated with important or representative themes or aspects of local, regional, or national history; whether the place is associated with historically important events, persons, groups, ideas, movements, social patterns, activities, or developments or advancements; and/or whether the place retains a use, function or integrity of association that contributes to the historical importance of the place.

Of the site and early occupancy of the house

The site overlooks the Whanganui River, and the Purua stream. The site was formerly within the Township of Campbelltown, under administration of the Purua Road Board between 1893-1912 at the time it was developed as a subdivision. Campbelltown was partway up Durie Hill, in contrast to Taylorville (along the riverbank), and Durietown, up the hill. It was developed somewhat earlier on in the growth of Whanganui and its immediate surrounds than much of the upper reaches of Durie Hill. Mid-nineteenth century photographs show a number of small houses particularly focused along Rees Street, and several larger homes dating to the 1870s still stand in the area, focussed along Rees and Garrett Streets. The vicinity of Allison Street was known by the late nineteenth century as Gordon's Paddock, after livery stablekeeper Charles Gordon who owned the section. Gordon's Paddock encompassed what is now Allison Street, and the beginning of Hipango Terrace, bordering the Durie Hill steps and footpath which had been erected around 1895.² It was intersected by Taylor Street, and the Taylor Street steps leading further up the hill. In February 1896, Gordon's Stables

² Subdivision section plan of the property of C. Gordon, advertising for a sale on 1 July 1899 from (Campbell 2016), p.28

advertised a two-roomed Cottage for removal, which may have been located at this site or in the immediate vicinity. Gordon's Stables themselves were located at the foot of the steps, where the Anzac Parade entrance to the Durie Hill elevator is sited today.ⁱ

In 1899, substantial development of Allison Street got underway as part of Gordon subdividing the section. The road was formed, though the layout initially ran a different course slightly higher up the hill, through Sections 24 and 27, and between Sections 30 and 31. The road layout was altered adjacent and through 27 and 30 in 1899 by notice of the Purua Road Board. 4 Allison Street was sited upon sections 11-12, two quarter-acre sections.

Te Rangi was constructed in 1903 by solicitor Cecil Wray, as noted in December 1906 newspaper advertisements for the sale by auction of the property.ⁱⁱ No architectural drawings or building permits could be found for the property. Wray only owned the house for three years before advertising it for auction.³

After the sale, new owner Harold FS Tewsley had it connected to the Telephone Exchange in March 1907, with number 168.⁴ Tewsley was manager of the local branch of the South British Insurance Company. A subsequent owner was Herbert Edward Dymock (1854-1934), from whose family several photographs and records have survived documenting their time in the home from 1915 through the 1930s. One sighted photograph shows a wedding party at the house taken when the Dymock's daughter Sybil was married in October 1919. Another shows a garden scene and shows that little of the exterior has been altered.

Information provided by Peace Through Unity Charitable Trust along with the nomination, originally supplied by the great granddaughter of Herbert and Sophia Dymock, provides some biographical information on their time in Whanganui and at the house. Herbert was born in Somerset, England, in 1848, migrating to New Zealand in 1868 and initially working as a farm cadet in Wairarapa. His wife Sophia Florence (nee Langdon), was also an English immigrant, marrying Herbert in 1870 and having 6 children. He farmed at Brunswick from 1873, and was later appointed to Waitotara County Council as its inaugural clerk in 1884 when it was formed. Dymock oversaw the relocation of the County Council in 1902 into then-new offices at 23 Ridgway Street, Duigan's Buildings, which still stands today.⁵ After retirement from the Council, he relocated to Whanganui and to Te Rangi. In his later years, Herbert was a churchwarden at Christ Church, and a director of Whanganui's Public Library. With interests in the Horticultural Society, yachting, and rowing, he passed away in 1931 aged 83. Sophia passed away in 1944, aged 92.

Of the Brookes and Peace Through Unity

Perhaps the most prominent owners were Anthony Brooke (1912–2011) and Gita Brooke (1931–2020) who moved to Whanganui in 1987. Anthony Brooke was closely associated with the state of Sarawak on the island of Borneo and today a part of Malaysia. Popularly known as the “last white Rajah of Sarawak”, Brooke was the last Rajah Muda (Crown Prince) of Sarawak. his grandfather, the

³ 'Business Notes' from Wanganui Herald, Volume XXXX, Issue 12050, 18 December 1906, Page 3, via <https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/newspapers/WH19061218.2.6>

⁴ 'Local and General' from Wanganui Herald, Volume XXXXI, Issue 12113, 9 March 1907, Page 4 <https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/newspapers/WH19070309.2.16>

⁵ (Pettigrew 2009)

explorer James Brooke, had been invested with ruler status by the Raja Muda Hassim of Brunei. James Brooke had served in the Bengal Army of the British East India Company and through assistance suppressing piracy and restoring the Sultan of Brunei's rule, was granted land in Sarawak in 1841 and later offered Governorship. The new Raj of Sarawak existed as a kingdom with dynastic descent through the male line. Anthony Brooke was the nephew of Vyner of Sarawak (or Charles Vyner Brooke), the last Rajah proper. Vyner had been appointed ruler in 1917 but co-ruled with his brother and heir Bertram, with increasing involvement of Bertram's son Anthony later in the 1930s.

Anthony was born on 10 December 1912, and educated at Eton College, then Trinity College, Cambridge, then the School of Oriental & African Studies, London. In 1934 he joined the Sarawak Civil Service, and for a time was attached to the Malayan Civil Service.⁶

He was appointed Rajah Muda (Crown Prince) and Officer Administering the Government in the absence of Rajah Charles Vyner, between April and October 1939. This meant he was effectively the acting Rajah at the time of the outbreak of the Second World War, and Sarawak's subsequent proclamation ending trade formally with Nazi Germany.⁷ Brooke subsequently left Sarawak in September 1941, joining the British Army. From 1943 he was stationed with the planning staff of Admiral Lord Mountbatten in Sri Lanka.

Sarawak was occupied with the rest of Borneo by the Japanese armed forces from 1941-1945. Anthony Brooke was demobilised in November 1944 and appointed the head of Sarawak's Provisional Government in Exile. However, negotiations on the future of Sarawak's sovereignty after the war were halted after Vyner offered to cede sovereignty to Britain.⁸

Vyner formally ceded Sarawak to Britain in 1946, abolishing the rule of the Brooke family. If Vyner had not ceded the state to Britain, then Anthony would have inherited the position of fourth Rajah of Sarawak. Anthony opposed the cession, as did the Malays, and an anti-cession movement began.⁹ Initially Anthony was banned from entering Sarawak by the British government, though he later advised them on its governance and administration in the lead up to the formation of Malaysia in 1963.¹⁰

Subsequently living in Singapore and the United Kingdom, Brooke was involved in world peace activism. He met Gita Keiller and her husband in 1970. Together with Gita, the Foundation for Peace Through Unity was founded in Sweden in 1975 as a vehicle for peace advocacy and promoting of peace studies. Gita (Birgitte) Lange was born in Copenhagen in 1931, the daughter of a minister, but spent five years in India with her parents before returning to Denmark when the Second World War began (Stowell 2020). Denmark was occupied by Germany and her family helped Jews flee Denmark during this period. In later life, she met Anthony (they married in 1981) and subsequently they co-founded Operation Peace Through Unity, then travelling the world from 1976-1988 engaging in advocacy for peace, indigenous rights and the disarmament movement.

Peace Through Unity operated largely internationally, but from 1987 Gita and Anthony were based

⁶ (Brooke n.d.)

⁷ (Brooke n.d.)

⁸ (Brooke n.d.)

⁹ (Chiam 2013)

¹⁰ (History of Sarawak n.d.)

in Whanganui and operated largely from Te Rangi. They purchased the house in 1988 from Paul and Ann McNamara who had owned it for ten years and undertaken internal work to reinstate the earlier room layout which had been largely removed on the northern side of the house in the early 1970s. By the time of Anthony's passing in 2011 and Gita's in 2020, the house had been placed within the ownership of the Peace Through Unity charitable trust who currently run it as a community retreat.

Social Significance

None Low Moderate High **Outstanding**

Whether the place has a strong or special association with, or is held in high regard by, a particular community or cultural group for its symbolic, spiritual, commemorative, traditional or other cultural value; whether the place makes a significant contribution to the uniqueness or identity of the locality, district, region or nation; whether the place is an icon or marker that a community or culture (past or present) identifies with; and/or whether the place is significant to tangata whenua.

Te Rangi primarily holds a strong association with the Brooke family, who in turn were the public face for the Peace Through Unity Charitable Trust. Accordingly the house is linked to peace activism and the world non-violence movement, and to connections with Sarawak that Whanganui holds through the charity and the Brookes.

As a base for Peace Through Unity, the house also holds associations with Ross Mitchell-Anyon. Mitchell-Anyon's only public sculpture, Handspan, was organised in large part by Peace Through Unity with some initial support from the Arts Council of New Zealand. Mitchell-Anyon's design was the winner of a wider public competition to submit proposals for the sculpture. The work, which also includes glass cast handprints by Whanganui artist David Traub, was opened at Pukenua Queen's Park in Whanganui on 21 September 2002, the first fixed International Day of Peace. Its formal dedication was carried out by then Governor-General the Honourable Dame Silvia Cartwright.¹¹

Te Rangi, like Handspan, remains in Whanganui as a space for contemplation with shared wider cultural social associations and significance.

Architecture, Technological and Construction Significance

None Low Moderate **High** Outstanding

Whether the place has architectural value; whether the place belongs to important architectural styles or is a good example of vernacular architecture; whether the place has distinctive attributes of an aesthetic or functional nature (including massing, proportion, materials, detail, fenestration, ornamentation, artwork, functional layout, landmark status or symbolic value); whether the place demonstrates innovation or accomplishment, through design, use of materials or technology,,

¹¹ (Coastal Arts Trail 2024)

method of construction or of craft skill; and whether the place is associated with an architect, engineer, designer or builder who has made a special contribution to their profession or work.

There is no attributed architect for the design and nor can any building permits be found for it. Nonetheless, it has architectural significance as a unique and distinctive villa which has been designed to take into account the location of the sun, and the wide-reaching views from the back of the section. This distinguishes it from the many speculative villas which were built in Whanganui in the nineteenth century and early twentieth century – but which failed to take advantage of sun or specific viewshafts. In this way the house is fairly avant-garde in its arrangement.

It includes unusual decorations on the verandah and an ornate glassed-in foyer looking onto the river which features leaded glass panels worked in an art nouveau design. In 1922, a motor shed was erected on the frontage to Allison Street, and this remains in its entirety. This is of some architectural interest as an early example of a vehicle garage.

A large majority of the interior has been altered, including the rearrangement of the floor layout. This is not apparent from the exterior of the building which has had next to alteration or additions made. One photograph from the time of the Dymock family, likely taken around the 1910s, shows the edge of a pergola or other structure with a verandah – likely an outbuilding – sited in the north-facing garden towards the end of Allison Street. It is not clear when this was removed but it is one of the few demonstrable alterations to exterior fabric at the property.

Setting and Contextual Significance

None Low **Moderate** High Outstanding

Whether the place contributes to or is associated with a wider historical or cultural context whether the place contributes to the streetscape, townscape or landscape; whether the place has collective value as a part or member of a group of inter-related, but not necessarily contiguous, heritage features or places or a wider heritage landscape; and whether the place is part of a group of heritage features or places (contiguous or discontinuous), that, taken together, have a coherence because of such factors as age, history, appearance, style, scale, fabric or use.

Thematically, this house is linked to other houses along Allison Street, Rees Street, and Garrett Street which were built in the 1900s and 1910s as substantial family residences somewhat removed from central Whanganui.

There is some evidence in the garden to suggest that there may have been a pedestrian pathway down to Rees Street allowing more direct access on foot to the house from downhill, although this path has been lost to subsequent development. This would help explain why the front door of the house faces away from Allison Street proper.

Through its links to the Brookes, Te Rangi house also has an association with the Handspan art installation at Pukenua Queen's Park, sculpted by Ross Mitchell-Anyon. Although these places are not contiguous, Pukenua Queen's Park can be seen from Te Rangi, from where the development

and installation of the sculpture was initiated. This links Te Rangī to a wider cultural context at townscape and landscape levels.

Archaeological and Scientific Significance

None Low Moderate High Outstanding

Whether the place has the potential to contribute new or important information about the history of the place or wider area through archaeological or scientific investigation; whether the place retains a physical form that can be appreciated by the community to aid in the understanding of past uses or history; whether the place has the potential to provide evidence to address archaeological or scientific research questions.

The site is close to known areas of early occupation and settlement and the land the house sits on has not been modified since the nineteenth century. In this way, the grounds of the house may have potential to provide new information about early human habitation in the area, although no archaeological material has been identified or recorded to date.

Representativeness, rarity and integrity

None Low Moderate High Outstanding

Whether the place is a representative example of a particular class or type of place; whether the place or a component of it is rare, unique, the first such place or is the only such place in the locality, district, region or nation; whether the place retains a significant amount of original or early fabric, or fabric from an important period in the place's history.

The exterior of the house retains considerable fabric from the time of construction, particularly decorative elements around the verandah sides of the house. Some elements, such as the glassed-in entry foyer, are unique in the locality and would have been designed specifically for the house (as opposed to more generic speculative homes in other parts of Whanganui).

Overall, Te Rangī is a good representative example of the sort of suburban villas that wealthier families were constructing in the outskirts of Whanganui at the start of the twentieth century, a time of considerable wealth and growth for the town.

Date: 1 February 2024

Research by: Scott Flutey

References

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Additional Photographs and/or images:



River-facing entrance foyer to Te Rangi, 4 Allison Street. Photo taken by S. Flutey, 27.7.2023.



North-east facing garden of 4 Allison Street. Photo taken by S. Flutey, 27.7.2023.



Commemorative installation placed by Operation Peace Through Unity in the garden of 4 Allison Street. Photo taken by S. Flutey, 27.7.2023.



The north-east garden of Te Rangi at the time of the Dymock family ownership, taken around the 1910s. Photograph provided by Peace Through Unity Trust, originally supplied by descendants of the Dymock family.



Wedding party gathered at Te Rangi on the occasion of the marriage of Herbert and Sophia Dymock's daughter Sybil, 1919. Photograph provided by Peace Through Unity Trust, originally supplied by descendants of the Dymock family.