

**CHRISTCHURCH DISTRICT PLAN – SCHEDULED HERITAGE PLACE  
HERITAGE ASSESSMENT – STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE  
HERITAGE ITEM NUMBER 185  
*DWELLING, DARESBUY AND SETTING – 9 DARESBUY  
LANE, CHRISTCHURCH***



**PHOTOGRAPH: B. SMYTH, 2018**

**HISTORICAL AND SOCIAL SIGNIFICANCE**

*Historical and social values that demonstrate or are associated with: a particular person, group, organisation, institution, event, phase or activity; the continuity and/or change of a phase or activity; social, historical, traditional, economic, political or other patterns.*

Daresbury and its setting have historical and social significance for their association with city merchant George Humphreys (1848-1934), for whom the house was built between 1897 and 1901. The house was originally known as Daresbury Rookery, named for the colony of rooks that nested in the property's large eucalypts until c.1945. Humphreys, who was born in England and immigrated to New Zealand in 1869, was co-founder of the wine and spirits merchants Fletcher Humphreys & Co. (1882). The company had offices and warehousing in an FW Petre-designed building in Cathedral Square (1884-86, demolished 1971) and later operated a wine and liquor store in Bealey Avenue that would be remembered by many Christchurch people for its wine barrel water feature. Humphreys also had considerable investments in hotels and, at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, was the consular agent for France in Christchurch. Humphreys Drive at Ferrymead was named for George Humphreys in 1950, and Daresbury Park in nearby Harakeke Street takes its name from his former home. Daresbury remained in Humphreys' family ownership until 1985, although large subdivisions in 1930 and 1954 greatly reduced the original curtilage. During the Humphreys' tenure Daresbury was used as a temporary vice-regal residence for two Governor-Generals in the

1940s (Lords Newall and Freyberg) and guests at the house included Lord Fisher, Archbishop of Canterbury, and the Duke of York, later George VI.

The house remains in private ownership and was substantially damaged in the 2010/11 Canterbury earthquakes. The property was sold following the earthquakes and remains unrepaired. In the early 2020s the extent of the garden was further reduced through subdivision.

### **CULTURAL AND SPIRITUAL SIGNIFICANCE**

*Cultural and spiritual values that demonstrate or are associated with the distinctive characteristics of a way of life, philosophy, tradition, religion, or other belief, including: the symbolic or commemorative value of the place; significance to Tangata Whenua; and/or associations with an identifiable group and esteemed by this group for its cultural values.*

Daresbury and its setting has cultural significance as an embodiment of the lifestyle of a professional business family in the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It also has cultural significance for its aesthetic and stylistic embodiment of a particular design and philosophy movement of the time – that of the Arts and Crafts movement. The stream corridor, which is included in the setting, is scheduled as a tributary of the Ōtākaro-Avon River, a Ngā Wai – Ōtautahi (Christchurch) rivers and streams, in the Sites of Ngāi Tahu Cultural Significance in the Christchurch District Plan.

### **ARCHITECTURAL AND AESTHETIC SIGNIFICANCE**

*Architectural and aesthetic values that demonstrate or are associated with: a particular style, period or designer, design values, form, scale, colour, texture and material of the place.*

Daresbury has high architectural and aesthetic significance for its design by leading New Zealand architect Samuel Hurst Seager (1855-1933). Daresbury is a three-storey house with 40 rooms. The lower storey is built of brick, and the upper storey is half timbered. It has half-timbered gables, a jettied or slightly cantilevered upper floor, leadlight fenestration and a tiled roof. It had distinctive brick chimneys with decorative chimney pots – these either fell or were removed during the Canterbury earthquake cycle damaging the roof. Internally it has considerable timber panelling and detail and an elegant timber detailed staircase that rises through the first two floors. Over time alterations have been undertaken largely to areas such as kitchens and bathrooms but it still retains many of the original fittings. It has a large gothic inspired billiard room with considerable timber detailing.

Hurst Seager made a significant contribution to the evolution of New Zealand architecture, both as a practitioner and a theorist. Daresbury is considered to be Seager's most outstanding English Domestic Revival style house, built at a time when the architect was designing dwellings in a variety of styles to suit the tastes and means of his clients, from the English Domestic Revival style of Daresbury and Elizabeth House (1914, demolished post-EQ) to the ground-breaking Arts and Crafts bungalows of The Spur development (1902-14).

Full of the detail inspired by the philosophy of the Arts and Crafts movement it is constructed on what became known as the 'Old English' style, a style popular in Canterbury in the period 1895-1915, and most local architects designed at least a few dwellings in the style. Seager had earlier established his career and demonstrated his Arts and Crafts sensibilities with the design of the Municipal Chambers (1886-87). Seager was also a lecturer at the Canterbury College School of Art, took a leading interest in town planning, and was a key figure in the emergence of New Zealand's architectural history.

## **TECHNOLOGICAL AND CRAFTSMANSHIP SIGNIFICANCE**

*Technological and craftsmanship values that demonstrate or are associated with: the nature and use of materials, finishes and/or technological or constructional methods which were innovative, or of notable quality for the period.*

The dwelling has high technological and craftsmanship significance as a well-built home of the period. The textural qualities of the brick and stucco walls and clay roof tiles, the gabled roof forms and tall chimneys (removed), and the half-timbering and leaded glass windows are all aspects of the exterior that demonstrate a high standard of construction and craftsmanship. Internally the craftsmanship is of high significance with the entrance hall, extensive use of timber panelling on the walls and ceiling, high level of craft detail in all the finishing and fittings throughout. It also has technological and craftsmanship significance for what it is able to reveal of building and craft methodologies and materials of the late Victorian period.

## **CONTEXTUAL SIGNIFICANCE**

*Contextual values that demonstrate or are associated with: a relationship to the environment (constructed and natural), a landscape, setting, group, precinct or streetscape; a degree of consistency in terms of type, scale, form, materials, texture, colour, style and/or detail; recognised landmarks and landscape which are recognised and contribute to the unique identity of the environment.*

Daresbury and its setting has high contextual significance for its contribution to the distinctive historical residential character of Fendalton due to its architectural style and large grounds. The house overlooks Waimairi Stream and is complemented by its large garden setting and mature trees. The setting consists of the land parcel for 9 Daresbury Lane with the addition of the stream corridor and bridge to the north, which historically was the primary access to the property. Several mature trees on the property are scheduled in the Christchurch District Plan, including Beeches and English Oaks.

Daresbury's garden was planned to complement the 'Old English' style of the house and when it won the Christchurch Horticultural Society's annual competition of 1932, it was said to be a quintessential British garden that had "...strayed 13,000 miles from home." (Strongman, p 176). The house has lost some contextual significance in relation to its former stable block which had been converted to a residence on Daresbury Lane and now demolished post-quake, but does have contextual significance in relation to Mona Vale, with which it has much in common both historically and architecturally.

Following the sale of the property post-earthquakes the garden portion to the north of the Waimairi Stream was subdivided in 2021 into separate parcels as part of a larger subdivision for residential development of the area between the stream and Fendalton Road. The new residential lots were accessed via a new accessway from Fendalton Road to the bridge. This subdivision and associated residential development reduced the setting to the immediate parcel on the south side of the Waimairi Stream.

## **ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND SCIENTIFIC SIGNIFICANCE**

*Archaeological or scientific values that demonstrate or are associated with: the potential to provide information through physical or scientific evidence an understanding about social historical, cultural, spiritual, technological or other values of past events, activities, structures or people.*

Daresbury and its setting are of some archaeological significance because they have the potential to provide archaeological evidence relating to past building construction methods and materials, and human activity on the site, including that which occurred prior to 1900. Waimaero-Waimairi Stream is scheduled in the Sites of Ngāi Tahu Cultural Significance in the Christchurch District Plan as a Ngā Wai – Ōtautahi (Christchurch) rivers and streams, tributary of Ōtākaro (Avon River). The land was owned by the Deans family at the outset of European settlement.

## ASSESSMENT STATEMENT

Daresbury and its setting have high overall significance to Christchurch, including Banks Peninsula and New Zealand as a turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century large Arts and Crafts inspired residence and use as a vice-regal residence. Daresbury has high historical and social significance for its association with businessman George Humphreys and the Humphreys' family in whose ownership it remained until 1985. The property has cultural significance for its embodiment of a particular design and philosophy movement of the time – that of the Arts and Crafts movement. The Waimaero-Waimairi Stream is scheduled as a site of cultural significance to Ngāi Tahu in the Christchurch District Plan. Daresbury has high architectural significance as the most outstanding example of Samuel Hurst Seager's interpretation of the English Domestic Revival style and Arts and Crafts inspired detail. Daresbury has high craftsmanship significance for the quality of its construction and detailing and high contextual significance for its place within the distinctive large houses that typify the suburb of Fendalton. Daresbury and its setting have potential archaeological significance due to its relationship to Waimaero-Waimairi Stream, a tributary with significance to Ngāi Tahu, as formerly part of the Deans' *Riccarton* estate and in view of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century development of the property.

## REFERENCES:

Strongman, T. *Gardens of Canterbury* (Christchurch, 1984)

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<http://www.heritage.org.nz/the-list/details/3659>

*Living with the Past: Historical Buildings of the Waimairi District* (Christchurch, 1983)

Samuel Hurst Seager DNZB Entry – Te Ara The Encyclopedia of New Zealand  
<http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/3s8/seager-samuel-hurst>

'Regal residence in Christchurch' *NZ House & Garden*  
<http://nzhouseandgarden.co.nz/state-of-grace/>

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PLEASE NOTE THIS ASSESSMENT IS BASED ON INFORMATION AVAILABLE AT THE TIME OF WRITING. DUE TO THE ONGOING NATURE OF HERITAGE RESEARCH, FUTURE REASSESSMENT OF THIS HERITAGE ITEM MAY BE NECESSARY TO REFLECT ANY CHANGES IN KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF ITS HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE.

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