



Dear Friends,

A huge thank-you to all who attended our Great Event held in the Great Hall earlier this winter. Under the inspiring guidance of event co-ordinator Dame Ann Hercus, the Friends raised an incredible \$50,000.00. We are very grateful to all those individuals and businesses that so willingly supported the event. A special thanks to our talented auctioneer Roger Dawson, of Harcourts, and to the evening’s entertainers “Malestrum” of Burnside High School. It was a wonderful event!

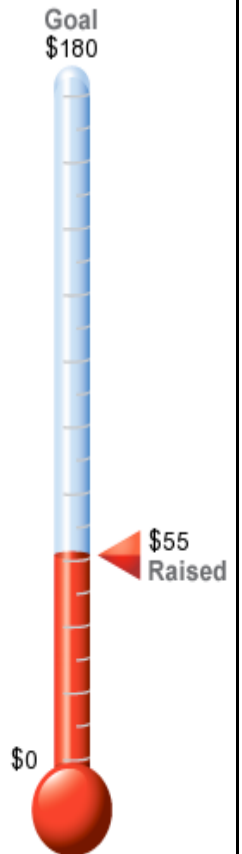
As a result a cheque for was presented to Gen Crawford, Chair of the Arts Centre Trust Board at a meeting of the Board last month. This currently brings our total fundraising, for the reinstatement of the eight-meter tall fleche, to be mounted on the Christchurch Boys’ High School building, to \$55,000. We are now well under way towards our target!

The Executive Committee of the Friends of the Arts Centre of Christchurch meets frequently and is currently working on several other potential projects. We are looking towards other activities during the summer period. If you have any worthwhile fundraising ideas, please do not hesitate to contact us. Please watch for further details in our next Spring Newsletter.

Graeme Wallis



A cheque for \$50,000.00 is presented to Jen Crawford



Our Fundraising Barometer for the fleche

The aims of the *Friends of the Arts Centre*:

- * To support and promote the Arts Centre of Christchurch.
- * To promote and encourage the use and enjoyment of the Arts Centre as an outstanding cultural centre for the benefit of the people of Christchurch, New Zealand and internationally.
- * To support and assist with programmes, activities and fundraising for the benefit of the Arts Centre in consultation with the Arts Centre Board and Management.

Executive Committee:

Tim Hogan, Dame Ann Hercus (event Co-ordinator), Lynne Lochhead (Secretary), Peter Morrison (Treasurer), Faye Parkhill, David Thornley, Peter Tuffley, Nathan Wallis and Graeme Wallis (Chair).

Contact Details

Our website can be viewed at: <http://friendsoftheartscentreofchristchurch.weebly.com/>
(The *Friends of the Arts Centre of Christchurch* is now a registered charity. (No. CC51240))

For further information or if you can assist us in any way, please contact the Friends at email: christchurchartscentrefriends@gmail.com

<https://www.facebook.com/Friends-of-the-Arts-Centre-of-Christchurch/1668219206745568>

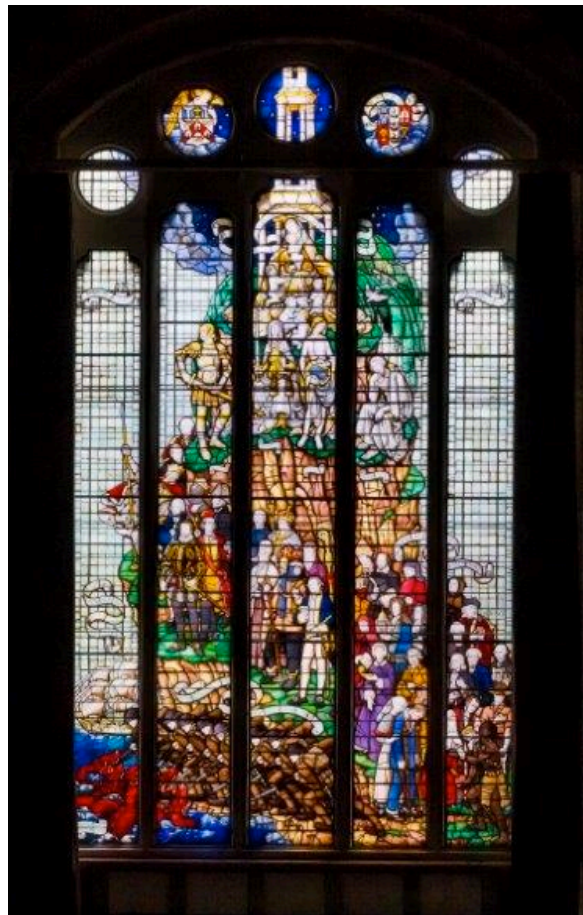
The Great Hall of the Arts Centre:

An Architectural Treasure Recovered

The reopening of the Great Hall at the Arts Centre in June 2016 is one of the most important dates in the history of the complex since the initial opening of the then College Hall in August 1882. Throughout the life of Canterbury College the Hall was one of the institution's most important spaces and was both the architectural highlight of Mountfort's original buildings as well as the site of many significant public occasions. By the 1970s it was one of the few spaces large enough for some exam purposes, but it was also the venue for many memorable concerts by performers such as the John Ritchie String Orchestra and the Prague Quartet. Once the Arts Centre became a reality it continued to function as an important performance venue, and the vital role it played in Christchurch's musical life was only fully recognised after it was no longer useable following the 2011 earthquakes. Its reopening is a cause for celebration as not only because we have the use of such an important venue back again, but because we can also relish, once more, one of Victorian New Zealand's most splendid architectural treasures.



The Great Hall of the Christchurch Arts Centre

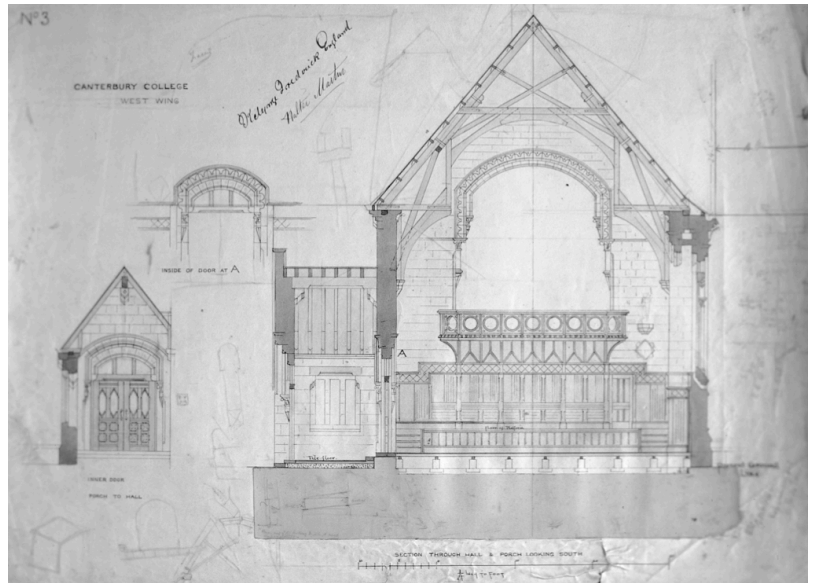


Segmental arches over windows

For many, Mountfort's Canterbury Provincial Council Chamber (1865) is his most important building, and the richly coloured interior of the Council Chamber tended to overshadow the more subtle effects of the Great Hall, but in many ways, the later building is more original than its earlier counterpart. The design of the Great Hall was a unique response to its site, forming the western termination of Worcester Street and framing the Canterbury Museum to its north. It is unusual in its use of two elements in particular; the deployment of segmental arches over its windows and doors and the design of its roof according to the principles of medieval hammer-beam construction. Mountfort's use of the segmental arch (so named because it forms the segment of a circle) in all his buildings for Canterbury College is unexpected, given his dedication to the Gothic style with its characteristic pointed arch. There is no adequate explanation for this choice in contemporary accounts. He may have chosen the segmental arch because of the association of the Gothic arch with churches, and he wanted to emphasise the secular nature of new Zealand's education system, or it may simply have been because he wanted to give the College buildings a distinct architectural character to differentiate them from the Gothic Revival forms of the Canterbury Museum, while still harmonising with this close neighbour. Certainly he was aware of the need to bring variety to a group of buildings all constructed within a decade or so of one another, a problem we are once again

familiar with as Christchurch rebuilds after so much destruction.

The choice of the hammer beam roof on the interior of the hall was probably determined by the decision to use the segmental arch. This form was inherently less adaptable than the pointed arch, the steepness of which could be adjusted to fit a narrow or a wide space. Being part of the circumference of a circle, the arc of the segmental arch was fixed. This meant that in order to span the width of the hall for the great north window, Mountfort had to find a way to increase its height. This was done by raising the arch on "stilts", but in order to accommodate this form within the ceiling of the hall, he had to artificially reduce the span from wall to wall. This is where the hammer-beam technique became useful, since medieval architects used these horizontal (hammer) beams

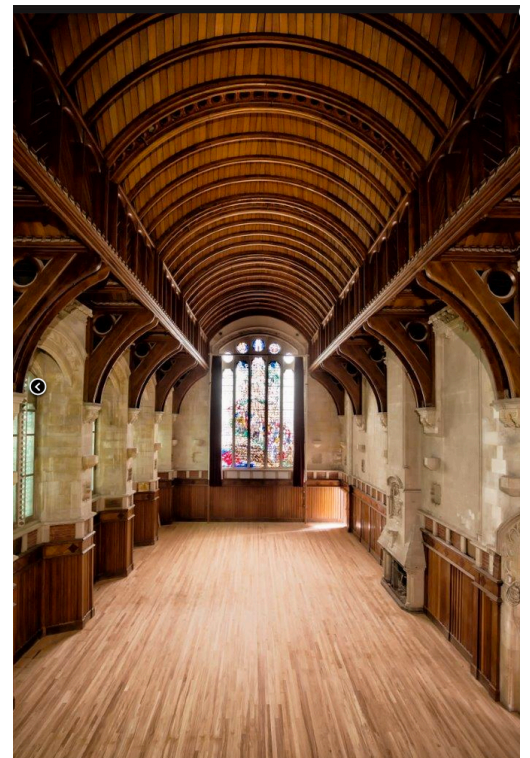


Early sketches

extending from the outside wall to reduce the overall width that timber vaults needed to span. The most famous example of a hammer beam roof is that of Westminster Hall in London, which dates from 1393 and forms part of the British Houses of Parliament. Mountfort, however, created a roof that was without precedent by combining the segmental arch form with hammer beam constructional technique.

There is also a link between the roofs of the Canterbury Provincial Council Chamber and that of the Great Hall. The ridge and furrow form used in the Council Chamber reappears in the Great Hall, but in the later building the timber is left in its natural state. Whereas the Council Chamber's constructional polychromy is a product of the contemporary High Victorian movement, the Great Hall's interior, with its subtle gradations of the different hues of native timbers contrasting with the Oamaru stone of the interior walls, reflects the quieter mood of late Victorian architecture. When it was opened in 1882 the hall was described as "a symphony of native timbers", a musical metaphor that is indeed appropriate to the space.

Mountfort, however, had one more trick up his sleeve. The hall's west wall is punctuated by a series of massive buttresses that jut into the space, while the east wall runs straight from end to end. Why are the two sides of the hall so different? The reason can be found in what existed already. The hall is buttressed to the east by the lecture rooms of the Clock Tower block that was completed in 1877, so there was no need to incorporate buttresses into the adjacent wall. On the west side there was no supporting structure but Mountfort chose to break up the wall plane by placing the bulk of the buttresses within the space of the hall, with only small projections along the street. What at first glance seems like an almost wilful use of asymmetry by the architect is, in fact, a perfectly logical approach to structural necessity.



The west wall punctuated by buttresses

It is all too easy to simply bask in the splendour of the Great Hall as an impressive architectural space, but next time you visit look around more carefully and take note of the skilful ways in which Mountfort has manipulated form, material and structure to achieve his effects. Who knows, you may find that he has further surprises in store....

Ian Lochhead

Membership Form January – December 2016



Surname(s): _____

First name(s): _____

Address: _____

City: _____

Post Code: _____

Phone: _____

Cell: _____

Email: _____

Membership Class (please tick one):

- Individual \$35
- Family \$65 (Include names of each family member)
- Student \$15
- Donation \$_____

Total Enclosed: \$_____

Tick if you would like a receipt

Please list your skills should you wish to volunteer:

Please make your cheque payable to the Friends of the Arts Centre of Christchurch and post with this form to:

The Treasurer,
Friends of the Arts Centre of Christchurch,
7 Stratford Street, Christchurch 8014.

OR Tick here if you have credited the Friends of the Arts Centre

SBS 031355 0807473 00 account for: \$ _____ and emailed details to:
christchurchartscentrefriends@gmail.com

The Friends of the Arts Centre of Christchurch is a registered charity. (No. CC51240)