



whole, and notwithstanding the potential archaeological values that may be present across the whole site.

## **HISTORY**

John Thomas Brown, a surveyor from Norwich, England, emigrated to New Zealand in late 1851 with his wife Emily and the first four of their eight children. The family appear to have lived in Christchurch for the first eight years of their residence in New Zealand. JT Brown (1816-88) took up three runs at Mount Thomas during the 1850s, leasing the property to the Maude brothers (Thomas and Edmund) for a term of five years in 1855. By February 1860 Brown had taken over management of the sheep run and evidently moved in to the earth brick and timber homestead he had built on the property. Thomas Maude married Emily Brown, the Browns' eldest daughter, at Mount Thomas in 1861; their daughter Sybilla is better known as Nurse Maude, the founder of district nursing in New Zealand. JT Brown was involved in the hotel trade, was a steward and president of the Canterbury Jockey Club and he and his wife were benefactors of the Anglican church at Fernside (H126). The station was managed by the Browns' son Edward in the 1870s and early 1880s. When the run was freeholded in the 1890s the family chose not to buy the leasehold land and so retained only the freehold, which was subsequently sold or leased by Herbert Brown (1860-1928), the Brown's youngest son, who managed the property from 1886 until 1910 and lived at the homestead until his death in 1928. Brown junior and his wife Annie (nee Mannering, 1862-1941) developed one of Canterbury's best-known gardens during their tenure at Mount Thomas. The homestead property was largely subdivided to its current extent in 1967 and remained in the family until 1985. It remains in private residential use.

## **HISTORIC AND SOCIAL SIGNIFICANCE**

The Mount Thomas Station homestead has high historic significance for its association with John Thomas and Emily Brown, their family and descendants and, more generally, the farming history of North Canterbury. The house is one of the oldest surviving colonial homesteads in Canterbury.

## **CULTURAL AND SPIRITUAL SIGNIFICANCE**

The Mount Thomas Station homestead has cultural value as a demonstration of the way of life of its early residents.

## **ARCHITECTURAL AND AESTHETIC SIGNIFICANCE**

The Mount Thomas Station homestead has architectural significance as a colonial vernacular dwelling with vestigial Domestic Gothic Revival styling in the form and disposition of its gabled dormers. As John Thomas Brown built the family's first two houses in Christchurch in the 1850s it is assumed that he was also responsible for the construction of the homestead. Alterations and additions made to the homestead around the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century occurred during Herbert and Annie Brown's tenure of the property, likely commencing around the time of their marriage in 1891.

## **TECHNOLOGICAL AND CRAFTSMANSHIP SIGNIFICANCE**

The Mount Thomas Station homestead has high technological and craftsmanship value for the evidence it provides of mid-19<sup>th</sup> century construction methods and materials. The use of sun dried bricks, also known as adobe, made from clay dug on the site, is particularly notable. Adobe was a more refined building method than the cob construction that was also used in the early colonial period. Norfolk, in which Norwich is located, is one of the counties in England that is known for its earth building tradition.

## **CONTEXTUAL SIGNIFICANCE**

The Mount Thomas Station homestead has contextual value for the contribution it makes to the historic character of its rural property and for its relationship to St Matthew's Anglican Church at Fernside (1874/1881, H126), which was endowed by the Brown family.

#### **ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND SCIENTIFIC SIGNIFICANCE**

As the homestead pre-dates 1900, its site has potential archaeological significance arising from the colonial development of the property.

#### **SUMMARY OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE**

The Mount Thomas Station homestead has high overall heritage significance to Okuku and Waimakariri district as a whole. The homestead has high historical significance for its age and association with the Brown family and cultural value as a demonstration of the way of life of its early inhabitants. The Mount Thomas Station homestead has architectural significance as a colonial vernacular dwelling and high technological and craftsmanship significance for its mid-19<sup>th</sup> century construction methods and materials, including adobe bricks. The Mount Thomas Station homestead has contextual value for the contribution it makes to its rural setting and its site has potential archaeological significance given the property's pre-1900 development and use.

#### **HERITAGE CATEGORY**

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#### **REFERENCES**

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**REPORT COMPLETED**

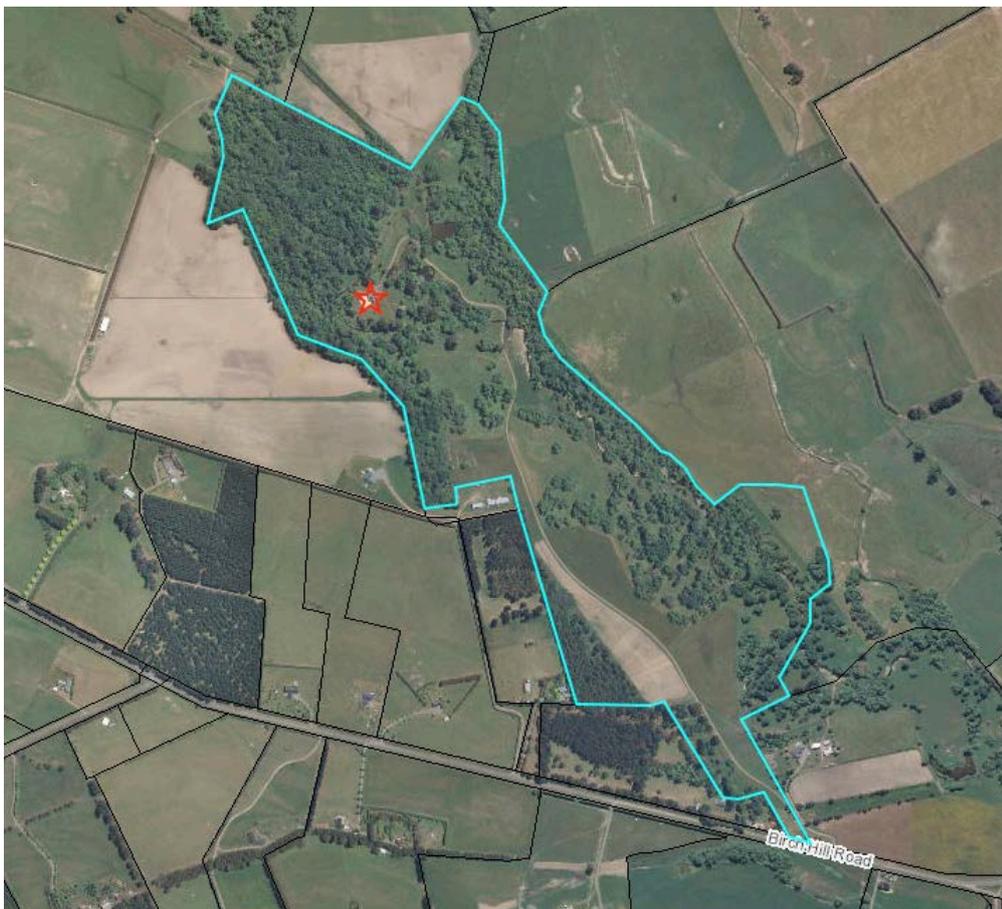
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Extent of scheduling, limited to immediate garden setting, Mount Thomas Station homestead, 436 Birch Hill Road, Okuku.



Property as a whole with house site marked by star.



Homestead as built.



Homestead after turn of the 20th century 'Tudorisation', since removed.