

The Anglican Historical Society of New Zealand *Te Rōpu Hītori o te Hāhi Mīhinare ki Aotearoa*

Arthur Purchas: his 'Selwyn' churches

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(AHS Posting, July 2024)

Introduction

This paper aims to elaborate on the significant role of the Rev Dr Arthur Purchas in helping establish what has come to be known as the 'Selwyn style' of church architecture.

His architectural-and-design skill was only one of his many extraordinary talents. Purchas remains one of New Zealand's 19th Century most remarkable, yet unrecognised men – an esteemed churchman, doctor, geologist, botanist, artist, musician, humanitarian, engineer and architect.¹

Arthur Guyon Purchas >>>

I, neither an engineer nor an architect, and with limited ability to assess the architectural or engineering merits of Arthur Guyon Purchas to any serious professional degree, have placed considerable reliance on the commentaries and analysis of other experts in this field. These include some of our best heritage architects, engineers, professional groups and associations who have studied the subject over many years since Purchas' death.

It should also be pointed out that the architectural plans for what we call today the 'Selwyn churches', were not always identified with a specific signature, so absolute 100% provenance is not easy to establish in every case. But after my own lengthy research, I have, so far, found no reason to question other expert opinions that Arthur Purchas is either wholly or substantially responsible for the design of all seven churches described in this Paper - and possibly even more.

Finally, writing historical biographies of people who lived 150 years ago is still a perilous occupation. It's usually a six-to-ten-year job - sometimes more. As a result, most serious biographers would claim to know their subject almost as well as themselves, a sense which develops from reading and studying so many personal family letters, documents, diaries and notes, all helping to shed light on what he or she did, thought, or enjoyed. I believe that church architecture was a passion for Purchas.



¹ A rare, very early photograph of Arthur Purchas (1821-1906) taken either by himself or by his friend John Kinder and kindly loaned by the Hochstetter Foundation after being given by Purchas to Ferdinand Von Hochstetter following his visit to NZ in 1859.

Background

Purchas' architectural and design efforts were not solely confined to churches. His design skills were applied to a variety of other Selwyn-era buildings, like schools, vestries, orphanages, shops, meeting halls and houses (such as the first home he built at Onehunga for the St Peter's parish but not discussed here).²

However, his expertise and reputation with his churches, working closely in the beginning with Frederick Thatcher, meant that others involved in the Selwyn building programme later on, always had clear and simple templates to follow. These were based, of course, on Selwyn's initial direction for an early or neo-Gothic exterior look, combined with relatively simple but effective building and construction techniques.

For churches, this was a rectangular nave, an apse or recess at each end for altar and font, a bell tower or belfry, and transepts for entrance porch on one side and/or vestry on the other - as cost allowed. Then there was the hallmark 60° shingle tile roof, exposed interior roof beams, small English Gothic pointed or square, lead-lined and diamond-paned windows, usually with mottled or amber-coloured glass. The early church interior or exterior frames³, were painted with linseed or other suitable oil, mostly tinted with umber pigment and usually either chamfered or bevelled. Panelling, either vertical or diagonal, was in totara or kauri, or other suitable native timbers.

So, there were many 'Selwyn' churches and buildings simply described as having come from his offices. All had to be 'signed off' by Selwyn before construction, with relatively minor variations only approved for reasons of cost, sheer practicality or function, or for engineering or ground foundation reasons. Overall design plans and working drawings usually included main furniture and fittings also, sparse as they were, such as clergy chairs, rails, pews or occasionally a pulpit.

Later variations – and they were relatively rare – involved the choice between suitable local timbers or stone, the size of the nave depending on anticipated congregation size, placement of tower or belfry for water tightness or structural solidity reasons, interior support beams instead of outside buttresses or bracing, vertical interior vs diagonal wooden lining and so on. A couple of the very early small chapels even had thatched roofs to start, usually made from bark or toetoe.

Hard lessons were learned in the early days – such as the early collapses of the first St Stephen's chapel at Judges Bay in 1847 and the Purewa church of St Thomas (finally declared unsafe in 1859 after serving the district for about 15 years). Both were failures of their foundations and the quality of the stone construction.

The evolution of the Selwyn churches also occurred over two distinct phases. The first was between the years 1844 and 1859, up to the time of what was called the 'frontier' churches in the Fencible period (All Saints Howick, St Peter's Onehunga, Holy Trinity Otahuhu, St Bride's, St Mathias, St James etc.) With a couple of obvious exceptions, they mostly involved pre-fabrication by Selwyn's carpenters at Purewa before later erection on-site.

It also included the time from when Selwyn left Purewa (after the troubles there of the mid-1850s) and relocated to Parnell. Construction momentum continued however, with the deanery, Bishopscourt and the first 'Old St Mary's'. At this time, the only church in the area was the Thatcher-designed St Barnabas

² Much of the initial cost of this house – both labour and materials - was carried by Purchas and not reimbursed by the diocese until many years later. Thus, he was always a 'tenant' in Onehunga.

³ Thatcher's St John's chapel and St Barnabas are the best early examples of exterior structural frames with single-skin walls.

which had already become too small for the district and was later removed to Mt Eden. The original St Mary's was consecrated in 1860 and served for another 30 years before demolition.

The second phase began after the Land Wars of 1861-63 when churches like St John's Drury, Papakura's Christ Church, All Souls at Clevedon, St Sepulchre, and many others were completed. It lasted well into the Cowie era including churches completed in locations well beyond Auckland, including a couple of Purchas designs in the South Island.

Who was Aurthur Guyon Purchas?

Arthur Purchas was fortunate having the parents he did – an English father, Robert Purchas, a successful engineer and bridge builder from a solid west-country family - and a mother of French aristocratic descent. But there was also tragedy in the family, Robert's first wife having died prematurely after providing him with four children, and his second wife Marianne, Arthur's mother, also dying early when Arthur was only ten.

Marianne had given him a good home education before she became ill and importantly, a keen sense of social justice and welfare for those less fortunate. While Arthur's father inculcated in his son the values of hard work and application for an inquiring scientific mind, his mother passed on those of compassion and humanitarianism while schooling him strongly in languages, reading and writing. It was to prove a powerful concoction. She even expressed the wish on her deathbed that Arthur might go to New Zealand to work there for 'the brave missionaries as a priest or doctor.'

After her death, Robert Purchas organised private tutors for his son to teach him more about science and engineering. Arthur also initially worked in some of his father's friends' businesses, before becoming fascinated by medicine, going on to study and graduate from the most famous university and hospital in England at the time - Guy's.

He left Guy's with flying colours, cited as one of the most active and intelligent students there, his skills in obstetrics, anatomy and surgery highly praised by some of medical history's most well-known and famous figures, such as Addison, Bright and Hodgkin.

Purchas, Thatcher and Selwyn

While studying at Guy's in 1841, Purchas had made a point of meeting Bishop George Selwyn after his consecration at Lambeth, to inquire about fulfilling his mother's dream and working with him in New Zealand. Selwyn suggested he finish his medical studies before joining him in Auckland.

Four years later, having written to Selwyn but having not heard anything back, and despite having secured a top job as resident surgeon at Liverpool's main hospital⁴, Arthur sailed for New Zealand to meet him again. Early in 1845, and arriving by chance in Nelson, he happened also to find Selwyn there on a local visit. He was gratefully 'signed on' after a brief conversation, before immediately heading back to the UK to get married and deliver some letters to Selwyn's friend, William Gladstone.

However, Purchas was held up in Sydney for a few months, trying to find passage on another ship. While waiting, he spent many hours with Edmund Blackett, the architect of the new Sydney cathedral of St

⁴ Later the Royal Liverpool Hospital. His glowing medical references are still held in the Auckland Museum Library.

Andrew's, conferring and collaborating with him on various aspects of that Gothic revival design⁵ and extending his architectural knowledge - and musical reputation - considerably in the process.⁶

After a hair-raising return voyage to the UK, and marriage to Olivia, he set sail once more on the long return voyage to Auckland. They arrived in late 1846, Olivia, now pregnant with their first child. Arthur Purchas was never one to stand still for long.

George Selwyn clearly saw a lot of himself in Arthur Purchas. Before Purchas had even arrived at Purewa, Selwyn was enthusiastically promoting his talents to his other clergy colleagues there. Both men were idealistic, men of action (athletic, physically and mentally strong) wanting to get things done, always learning, positive and determined, each with strong missionary zeal.

Purchas was clearly taken on by Selwyn as a key supporter. He needed such men to help him fulfil his objective of establishing his new Church of England in New Zealand, with its new form of governance, ministry and education using a combined and re-invigorated missionary and settler clergy. Before beginning his own very brief spell of theological training, as one of the small groups of very early 'non-missionary' clergy, Purchas came under serious scrutiny by Henry Williams' CMS team. But within weeks he had won their trust and friendship by sheer force of character, a warm, collegial attitude, obvious ability and hard work. Olivia Purchas also made a significant impression, particularly with Selwyn's wife Sarah and their close, life-long relationship was to become a major factor easing later difficulties between their respective husbands.

What Arthur didn't know when he and Olivia arrived at Purewa (in October 1846) was that Selwyn was already caught up in some serious tension between himself and his small clergy group, and Williams' much larger missionary team (men who had already been on the ground and working with Māori for some time). This tension (heightened by the question of whether Selwyn's church was there primarily for Wakefield's New Zealand Company European settlers or for Māori) was an early hindrance to Selwyn's plans for building his new, united colonial church.

Under growing pressure as well to get his building program under way, Selwyn therefore saw the young Purchas as a strong ally - not just because of his medical talent and people-skills, but his unexpected, additional expertise in building design, engineering, music and languages, botany and geology. Although Purchas was quickly thrown into the main medical role at St John's, while still undergoing his theological training, Selwyn then turned to him to help main-man, Frederick Thatcher, bring his building design concepts to fruition.

Thatcher and Purchas got on very well indeed. Thatcher was a trained architect (some of his buildings are still standing in London) but still grieving over the early death of his wife. He had come to New Zealand for a new start, initially finding a job on Governor Grey's staff before joining Selwyn to train for the ministry. With his own sound knowledge of engineering principles and design from his bridge-builder father, Purchas was also able to conceptualise and draw up new ideas quickly and precisely.⁷ Purchas and Thatcher found an instant close connection and friendship as they began collaborating on the job of developing the 'Selwyn style'.

⁵ See Papers Past NZ Herald, Jan 1896.

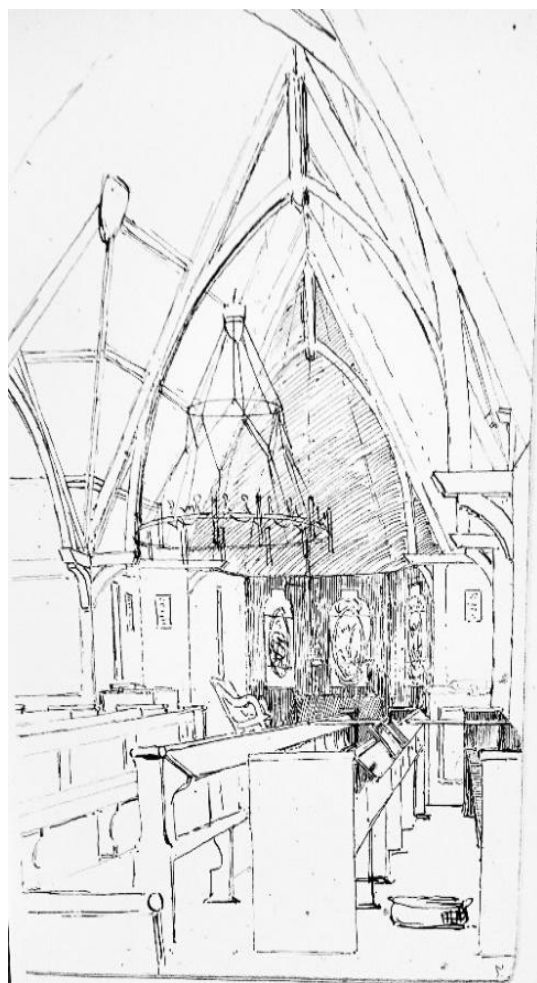
⁶ AGP helped found the Sydney Choral Society during this stopover.

⁷ As evidenced by one of his earliest free-hand sketches (1847) above, of the interior of the St John's chapel at Purewa (Family files).

The first of the 'Selwyn churches' proper ⁸, excluding the ill-fated St Stephen's and St Thomas' buildings, had been a small chapel for Robert Maunsell's mission at Maraetai, near Port Waikato. Designed by Thatcher, it was described by Maunsell himself as 'a little Gothic building ... which was to serve as a neat model for a New Zealand church' ⁹. It was built in timber, not Selwyn's initially preferred stone, and completed in the autumn of 1846.

Thatcher continued with the small, thatched chapel of St Mark's, the St John's chapel at Purewa ¹⁰ [St John's Chapel >>>](#) and the very small, 'temporary' schoolroom-chapel of St Andrew's in Epsom. All these, plus some of the early buildings at St John's College itself, like the hospital, were approved by Selwyn prior to and immediately following Purchas' arrival at Purewa late in 1846.

Only months later, In 1847, as Purchas began to find himself caught up in Selwyn's financial and people problems at St John's, Thatcher was busy finalising plans for All Saints at Howick – the first of Selwyn's Fencible churches. The atmosphere at Purewa had become even more 'tense', as Selwyn's relationship with Henry Williams and his missionary group over land purchases got worse and the smaller number of priests, men in training and their families arguing with the Bishop about insufficient stipends and training issues. It was a very testing time. Purchas, as a relatively new arrival and under some pressure to take sides at this time, relied heavily on his healthy relationship with Thatcher, not just because of their mutual interest in architecture and the joint workloads they had, but also because of Arthur's added heavy responsibilities in the medical and musical activity at St John's.



Governor Grey's urgency for the Fencible settlements to be established at Howick, Panmure, Otahuhu and Onehunga then led to Selwyn's rapid decision to ordain Purchas as deacon (after only 10 months' training) and the requirement to build church, school and house at Onehunga – in that order. This was actually a happy relief for Arthur and Olivia, although it meant he had to walk a couple of times a week from Purewa to Onehunga and Epsom to take services and to start on-site preparation etc. He also began travelling by foot and canoe even further afield, his parish also including Mangere, Mauku and the Manukau shores past Cornwallis to Huia.

St Peter's – Onehunga

The overall design of that first Onehunga church of St Peter's is attributed mainly, if not solely to Purchas, working in collaboration with Thatcher. Thatcher's biographer, Margaret Alington, confirms this: *'It was unusual for Thatcher not to introduce a pointed window at least in the gables; nor was it his practice to use buttresses ... there is a strong likelihood that the design of St Peter's was influenced by the unusually*

⁸ Auckland's first church was St Paul's, designed by William Mason and opened in 1843.

⁹ Garrett P 158

¹⁰ Thatcher used the assistance of Reader Wood, another British architect and later controversial politician, on this project.

gifted Dr Purchas, a view also strongly supported by Professor C R Knight (probably New Zealand's leading authority on Selwyn churches and their architecture) up until his death in 1972.

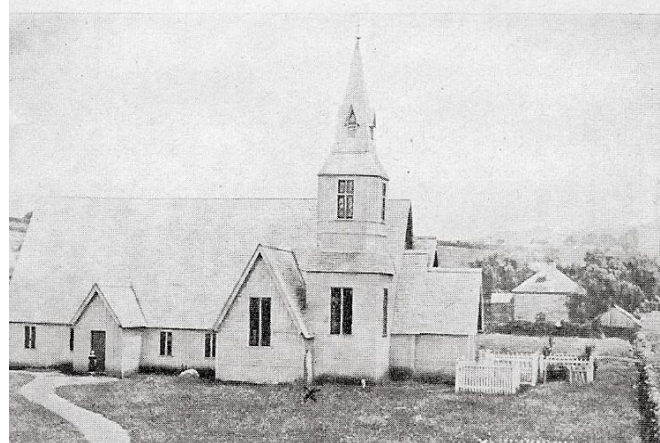
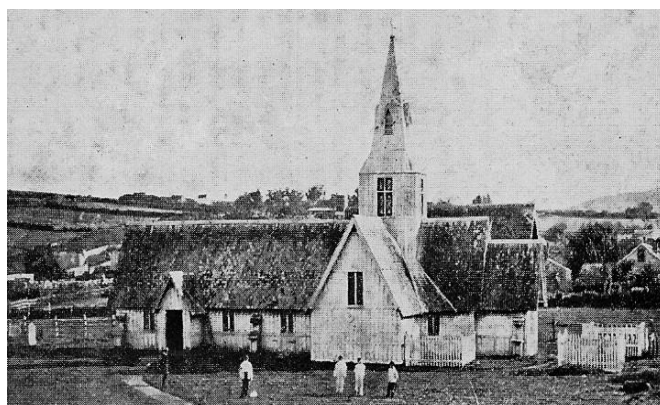
The Selwyn building process at the time was all about pre-fabrication (frames, roof structures and supporting buttresses etc) all assembled and put together as much as possible by Selwyn's head carpenter and builder (A. A. Hunter) at Purewa. Hunter was helped with this by Selwyn's college students, often removed from the classroom - not without protest - and the various assembled parts were transported by ship or dray to the site.

The entire St Peter's project – design, site preparation and actual construction - continued through the second half of 1847 and into June 1848, when the church was finally opened. Six months later, feeling the need for some greater 'separation' from Selwyn and any risk of further unhelpful conflict, Purchas moved from Purewa to Epsom, then a promising new farming district. Arthur and Olivia shifted into a small temporary home there, not far from the single-room St Andrew's chapel. By now he was walking between the St Peter's construction site and Epsom virtually daily, conducting services in both places on Sundays, with trips to Mangere, Mauku or Purewa during the week for services and medical consultations.

St Peter's incorporated many of the same design features as Howick's All Saints, although it was much larger with seating for nearly 300. It had an octagonal tower and central spire, but without the external buttresses or bracing as in the earlier Thatcher-designs. But the same small, vertical gothic windows, 60° gable roof, including chancel and porches, plus the exposed inside roof trusses and vertical interior board lining, all made for an extraordinarily pleasing overall 'look'.

The only issue – which also developed later at Howick – was the central placement of the tower. It proved difficult to be braced properly. Purchas finally had to rectify this 10 years later by dismantling and relocating the entire structure on the ground. These two images show St Peter's as the tower was at first and as it looked after Purchas had relocated it. >>>

(Ak Library Heritage Collection 957 192 1 & C11407)



Holy Trinity (1) – Otahuhu

The second and third churches attributed to Arthur Purchas are the two original Holy Trinity buildings in Otahuhu. While no signed plans have so far been found, the considered architectural consensus, together with specific reference in newspaper reports of the day ¹¹, clearly identify Purchas as the architect. The first church was commissioned for Otahuhu by Selwyn in 1852, to be built on the Anglican cemetery land in Church St. It was a small chapel with the bell tower at one end. But it soon proved inadequate for the

¹¹ The Daily Southern Cross reported at the dedication of the 2nd Holy Trinity church that '*it was built on the same plan as the Mauku church*' (*St Bride's*) – Papers Past 21/9/1863

fast-growing local population of Fencibles and other military people and the new settler families supporting them.



The first Selwyn church at Otahuhu, Holy Trinity (Richardson Collection AKL PH- ALB4)

Holy Trinity (2) – Otahuhu and Mangere East

A new site was found for the replacement church (the current church's location) and a larger Holy Trinity church designed, built and dedicated in 1863. The original small church was also removed to the same site and used alongside as a schoolroom until 1912 when it was destroyed by fire and, probably with it, the original Purchas plans.

The particular features of the second Holy Trinity church, its special detail of interior and exterior plan, elevation, tower location etc. carry all the hallmarks of an Arthur Purchas design, as acknowledged by Professor Knight, Heritage NZ, and others 'in the absence of any other published name'. This famous little church remains in use today, as the Selwyn Church in Mangere East. It was shifted there from Otahuhu in 1927 and rededicated a year later.



*Purchas's second Holy Trinity church on its new Otahuhu site.
The original church is just visible in the background, before it was destroyed in the fire of 1912.
(This building is now the Selwyn church at Mangere East (AKL Richardson 653-71))*

St James - Mangere

About the time that Purchas began designing his first Otahuhu church in the early 1850s, he was also being pressed by his friend and Anglican lay preacher at St Peter's, Tamati Ngapora, to build a church for Māori. Purchas was already a trusted confidante of both Te Wherowhero, the paramount rangatira of the day and later first Māori king, and Ngapora, his main advisor. Earlier George Grey had specifically asked Purchas to assist Te Wherowhero with re-establishing his new home at Mangere. When this was

done Te Wherowhero had reciprocated by allocating a special three-acre site on Mangere mountain for a church. With Ngapora's help, Purchas had little trouble persuading Selwyn of the importance of such a project.

Selwyn had been under some pressure, since the opening of St John's at Purewa, to train and ordain Māori as a matter of greater priority. This had been part of the earlier discord between the missionary and clergy bodies and Māori. The building of a new church for Te Wherowhero and Ngapora's Ngāti Mahuta people was seen as a great opportunity to heal any past resentment.

Selwyn gave Purchas the go-ahead to design the church,¹² also appointing his new Māori missionary Robert Burrows to supervise construction and donating £10 to the cause. Ngapora's people at Mangere fundraised almost the entire amount required, and Purchas finalised his design, using stone from the Mangere mountain crater to save costs.

The result was St James, still viewed today as an Auckland architectural 'treasure'. It was opened in 1857 and is one of the five Purchas churches still in daily use. Another early Auckland historian described it as a monument to the 'friendly co-operation' which existed between Māori and British before the disastrous land wars of the 1860s. The opening of St James was also significant for the appointment of Rota Waitoa as an assistant priest and deacon at St James – Waitoa being the first Māori clergyman to be ordained and a long-term friend and chaplain of Selwyn.

In this respect, and in view of the later insulting and ill-advised British 'acquisition' of the church for use as a courtroom for confiscation hearings after the Land Wars, St James retains a special place in our colonial history.

This very early image of St James, from the Brookfield-Purchas family files, is thought to have been taken by John Kinder at its opening in 1857 and shows Purchas standing with Rota Waitoa and other family members. >>>



St Bride's - Mauku

Purchas' recognition and success with his functional and attractive Selwyn church designs then led to the further request from the people of Mauku (around 1858) to design a church for them. Discussions took place over a two-year period with Purchas agreeing to the task on the condition that all the funds necessary were raised beforehand.

Arguably still the most attractive of all Selwyn churches, St Bride's was built on a hill in the Mauku countryside. It has been described as perfectly proportioned and detailed, despite having no side aisles

¹² Purchas as architect, also confirmed by Heritage NZ.

or transepts. The main entrance porch sits below a 20-metre-high spire and bell tower, giving it the same distinctive look as other Purchas churches



<<< St Bride's, Mauku as it looked in the early 1930s.
(AKL Footprints)

When some of the funds failed to materialise towards the end of the project, Purchas was asked to delete the spire. A debate ensued but he stood his ground, offering to pay the cost himself if necessary. He won the battle, and the church was opened in 1861 with its spire, although still without a full-time priest. It was not consecrated until 1886; the church having been put to use as a fort during the Land Wars and later used by different denominations among the local community.

St Stephen's - Tuahiwi

By the 1860s, Purchas's skill and reputation for his church designs had clearly spread far and wide. Two friends and associates from much earlier days (Captain James Ninnis, an engineer who had worked with Purchas in Onehunga on the design and manufacture of a revolutionary flax machine, and Rev James W Stack, a former student at Purewa and well known to Purchas) were both working among Māori in Kaiapoi, North Canterbury.

Canterbury's Bishop Harper had initially set up a Māori mission in 1859 on what was a very early Ngai Tahu pa site at Kaiapoi. Stack was asked to run it, while Ninnis had built his new flax mill nearby to make best use of local Māori labour.

But as more and more settlers arrived in Kaiapoi and with all the productive land around the original kainga threatening to get 'over-run' by Pakeha, Harper asked Stack if he would re-establish the mission.

The local runanga or Māori council, Te Ngai Tuahuriri, gave the idea their full support and with a church also a priority, proposed one be built on an all-new site at nearby Tuahiwi on 20 acres, gifted for the purpose. It was to become the first church for Māori in the South Island and the project provided all the encouragement the local hapu needed to relocate there.

The closeness of the Ninnis-Stack relationship with Purchas, plus the many common features of the new St Stephen's church with his earlier designs, would be enough for most to confirm it as Purchas' work. In this case however, additional proof lies in the acknowledgement of Arthur Purchas as architect on the church's foundation stone, laid with much fanfare by Sir George Grey in 1867. ¹³

Prominent art historian Jonathan Mane-Wheoki is one of many who have admired this Heritage building: *'St Stephen's is one of the most perfectly preserved of a group of later Selwyn Gothic churches, whose architectural qualities are of national significance ... notable for its balanced proportions, characteristic of its designer, Arthur Purchas'.*

¹³ See *'Koro'*, book by J W Stack. Refer also Heritage NZ website re Purchas accreditation, similarly from architect historian, Peter Sheppard. Also, Waimakariri Dist Council Heritage Item on 2021 District Plan. (Heritage NZ Category 1 status).



Heritage New Zealand says St Stephen's is similar in many respects to both St Bride's and St Peter's (Akaroa) ... *'in particular the square, three-tiered tower ... is characteristic of Purchas designs'*.

<<< A historic image captured at the opening of St Stephen's, Tuahiwi, 1867 (Canterbury Museum 1957.13.219)

St Peter's - Akaroa

A final example of Purchas' work is St Peter's Akaroa, despite the absence of signed plans. However, as a Heritage Assessment for the Christchurch City Council in 2014 says: *'Research to date suggests that the original church of St Peter's Akaroa was designed by Arthur Guyon Purchas ... The church today has high architectural and aesthetic significance due to its association with two architects prominent in the construction of NZ churches – Arthur Purchas and Benjamin Mountfort'*.

Old images of Purchas's original (1863) church alongside those of the building today, leave little doubt among heritage architects and experts that the original Akaroa church is certainly from the Purchas drawing board.

St Peter's, Akaroa (courtesy Heritage NZ website) >>>

That first building however, also proved too small. Some 13 or 14 years after the opening, Christchurch architect Mountfort was engaged to increase its capacity with his addition of sympathetically drawn, enlarged chancel and transepts.



Again, St Peter's is a prominent and much-admired landmark church today, standing out as a major tourist attraction in Akaroa and similarly accorded Category I Heritage status by Heritage NZ.

Summary

Even without his obvious architectural skill and achievement, Arthur Purchas would still rank as a polymath and truly remarkable individual. His reputation alone, as one of New Zealand's most significant pioneer surgeons and doctors, is acknowledged today by our most senior and well-known medical historians and practitioners. Within the Anglican colonial church as a priest and man of counsel, his immense influence and 'standing' endured for 60 years, from his earliest days in New Zealand in 1846-47, through both the Selwyn and Cowie eras and into the 20th century, until his death in 1906.

As an architect, among the key attributes Purchas brought to his own designs were the artists' eye for form, style and perspective combined with an expert engineer's skill in designing ingenious but simple structures under often serious financial or material constraints.

He had no problem immediately picking up on Selwyn's Gothic design ambitions, enhancing their overall utility and look with functional belfry or distinctive bell tower, small porches, beautiful interior buttressing and beams, while always managing to retain a uniform and distinctive appearance. The bells of course, were important as dual-purpose items, serving the entire local community as a warning or emergency system as well as providing the general rallying call for services, meetings and other public functions.

Several heritage architects have specifically praised his great sense of proportion and scale, which - combined with his attention to eventual siting and placement - could enhance even the smallest buildings.

There is little doubt that Purchas's warm and collegial personality was also a major factor in helping him in the early days to develop his architectural skill, first alongside people like Blacket, Thatcher and Wood, then also with the builders and carpenters who delivered the highly successful end results. His talent as an artist, able to sketch up concepts and design principles so others could more easily visualise a final product, was also a major part of his success. Consequently, his designs today – five of which are still in daily use and regarded as heritage 'gems' and even tourist attractions - all share a distinct Purchas 'look', while still fitting neatly into the overall 'Selwyn' style.

Purchas was a man who inspired confidence from others in everything he did or proposed, because he was always realistic and definite about what could be achieved with the funds available. That pragmatism and common sense was evident not only in his building and construction work, but also in his medical and surgical life where his abdominal operations were groundbreaking (and of major significance at the time) with a virtual 100% success rate.

The esteem in which he was held by people like Cowie, Averill, Grey, Ngapora and so many other business, church and political leaders of 19th century New Zealand, both Māori and Pakeha, is well summarised in Averill's description: '*... perhaps the most gifted person ever to come to New Zealand*'.



Purchas was a lifetime attendee at church synods. Shown here in 1899, he is seated prominently in front, a couple of seats away from his close friend, Bishop Cowie, (long white beard and mortarboard).

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