

## Warwick House (formerly “Sunnyside”)

64 Brougham Street, c1843 - 1854

Nelson City Council Heritage A Listed

**Architectural Style:** spectacular early Victorian neo-Gothic home covering 1,000m<sup>2</sup>.

### ABOUT THE AREA

The streets around Brougham Street and Upper Collingwood Street are often known as Nelson's Dress Circle, due to their elevated position and the number of large old houses sited there. Brougham Street was probably named after the Brougham, a ship carrying immigrants which arrived in Nelson in March 1842. Lord Brougham was a Lord Chancellor of England in Grey's ministry of 1830. Although now a quiet residential street, an early map of Nelson had planned for army barracks at one end and a house of correction at the other.

### HISTORY OF THE HOUSE

Alfred Fell who came to Nelson in 1842 was the first owner. Fell came to Nelson in 1842 on board the third immigrant ship, *The Lord Auckland*. He formed a land agency with Henry Seymour soon after arriving (Fell & Seymour) and together they purchased twenty acres of land in Nelson. The land ran from the Brook Stream in the east, the 'Seymour Oak' and Bronte Street to the north and back up the Brook Valley and part of the northern Grampians. That same year Fell also married Henry Fell's daughter Fanny.

Fell and Seymour both built houses on their land in Nelson. Originally christened “Sunnyside” by the Fells, the house was completed in 1854. No expense was spared in its construction. Only a few months after completion or perhaps while it was still being built, the house was almost burnt to the ground by a large fire in the Grampians. The whole town, including the prisoners from the Church Hill jail turned out to save it. Many prisoners had their sentences reduced as a result of fighting the fire. During the Fell's tenure, a family of noisy peacocks roamed in the beautiful gardens.

The Fell family returned to England in 1859 for the schooling of their eight children. Before leaving, Fell sold his business to George Bennett and Nathaniel Edwards, a Nelson businessman who had worked for Fell and later became founder of the Anchor shipping line. Sunnyside was leased by David Monro, an MP until 1862, when it too was purchased by Edwards.

A period of expansion followed, with Edwards adding a new wing on the southern side encompassing fifteen rooms and two towers, a three story north wing with a ballroom and four storey tower. Once completed, the house had about fifty rooms. Edwards passed away a few years after finishing the renovations. The property valued at £140,000 was left to his widow who left to live in England.

Following Edwards' death, the house was administered as a 'Gentlemen's Boarding House' before being closed up for about ten years. It was around this time that the name was changed to Warwick House perhaps because of the association with Sunnyside, Christchurch's mental institution.

The house was sold in 1910 and much of the land was subdivided off while another part was donated to Nelson City Council for the creation of Seymour Avenue, named after Alfred Fell's wife Fanny.

In 1915 the house was purchased by Charles B. Pharazyn. He discovered that part of the property had been damaged while being boarded up, so he decided to remove the damaged south wing. He and his family lived there until the 1930s.

Warwick House was then sold to the firm of William Vernon Rout. Around 1942 they converted the gentlemen's smoking rooms and servant quarters into apartments. During the late 1940s much of the exterior of the house was stuccoed over and the huge two-level conservatory was mostly removed. While owned by the firm Rout, Milner and Fitchett, the house was converted into five flats and much of the land was sold off. The house had a large number of tenants over the years including well-known artist Jane Evans who lived in the ballroom flat for several years. In 1960 the house was purchased by Gordon and Wendy Burke who later sold to their son Jeremy. In 1986 it was purchased by Jude Pattison and Rob Brunette.

When current owners Jenny and Nick Ferrier purchased Warwick House in 2003 it was in a state of serious disrepair. They embarked on an extensive renovation of both the house and garden, discovering many hidden treasures in the process, including archways, ornate ceilings, a hidden staircase, wine cellar, cast iron gates and original leadlight windows made in the UK for the Edwards family. They used a crane to paint the western side. The property is now used as a boutique bed and breakfast.

## STYLE & CONSTRUCTION

Architecturally, Warwick House is one of the finest and largest examples of early Victorian Gothic Revivalism remaining in New Zealand. No expense was spared in its construction.

Designed by builder/architect Mr Goodall, features of the 1,000m<sup>2</sup> home include the 100m<sup>2</sup> grand ballroom with a matai dancing floor and the four-storey octagonal tower with large peaked lead roof on the east side. Apart from the timber and bricks, all building materials were imported from the UK, including the wrought iron gates as well as the glass, nails and roof tiles. Other major features are the two Oriel windows facing west with their fifteen rounds of decorative timber, all held together by large hand-made nails, five large bay windows, six original fireplaces, numerous internal arches and scrolls, original dados, pictures rails, architraves and cornices. The walls are all lathe and plaster, which took two years to fully cure. Over 7000 Welsh slate tiles were used for the roof.

This information was prepared for the Nelson Cancer Society Heritage Homes Tour 2018.

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