

GRAND *Old* DAME

This house on a hill has undergone many transformations over its 82 years, with the current owners set on restoring it to its original glory.

Words **Rosa Shiels** Photos **John McCombe**





There's a grand old dame who lives on the hill. Her bones are aristocratic, her raiment stately, but her heart is warm.

"She" is no lady in the corporeal sense, but a mansion built on the Cashmere Hills in 1928 as a family home for Archibald Henry Anthony, a lawyer whose name lives on in the legal firm Anthony Harper.

At Archibald's request, the architect, William Tengrove, built the house to emulate an Englishman's stately residence. It was designed during the hedonistic Roaring Twenties, when flappers in cloche hats and fringing danced the Charleston, jazz was coming of age in the United States, and art deco was the flavour of the times. This classy old girl in Cashmere bears some allusions to the architectural style in her lines and decoration, from the floret designs in the cut-glass window panelling of the entranceway, to the wooden curvature of the banister.

The renamed Hackthorne Gardens is about to embark on a whole new era.

Serena Bailey and Michael Starling were not expecting to find such a property when they tentatively started looking around for a long-term project into which to sink some of their energy and spare time – not that they have a lot of spare time at the moment. Both are busy defence lawyers, with intensive work to do in their own practices. They were unprepared for the visceral reaction they experienced when they first saw this house on the hill.

"Michael saw it a few days before I did, because I was caught up in court," Serena says. "And I remember getting a text from him that afternoon saying, 'Damn! You'll love it', and thinking it must be something special."

It was a perfect June day when Serena got to see the house.

"It had been empty for six years and the garden was very overgrown, but the property itself, the house, was so majestic and beautiful, with the view across to the snow-capped mountains and the blue, blue sky. And if I closed my eyes for a moment, I could see this property restored as it should be."

Serena imagined the house full of people, live jazz in the lounge, a manicured lawn, spruced-up gardens with roses in full bloom and a lavender border, and was smitten. The dress-circle view of Christchurch sealed the deal; Serena was sold on the property.

"I felt a passion I hadn't felt for a long time about something and looked at Michael and said, 'We'll do whatever we need, if we can, to get this house'."

“Michael saw it a few days before I did, because I was caught up in court. And I remember getting a text from him that afternoon saying, 'Damn! You'll love it', and thinking it must be something special.”

Serena Bailey

That moment, when her heart said "yes" to the property, signalled the start of heads-down, tails-up work. If they were to bring their shared vision of boutique accommodation for small groups to fruition, much work was needed to make it ready.

The house has seen several incarnations since it was built as a private home and ensuing owners made changes, some of which were in line with Serena and Michael's plans and others that were not.

Archibald Anthony sold the property to the New Zealand Trust Board for Home Schools for Curative Education – unusually, for the proceeds of a Capping Day procession – and in 1965 it became the Shirley and Grace Hohepa Home (named after Archibald's daughter and wife), housing intellectually disabled children.

From 1987, when the Hohepa Home staff and residents moved to Halswell, it became a boutique bed and breakfast establishment, with

guests ferried to and from the airport in the restored vintage cars of the owners. These owners also added several arched windows, which were formerly in Nazareth House.

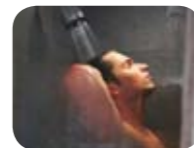
In 1999, new owners renamed the property Maddison on Cashmere and converted it to upmarket accommodation for the elderly. They excavated beneath the original two storeys to add ensuite rooms, a commercial kitchen and laundry, and staff quarters. A large quarried area cutting into the garden below the driveway was to be an extension, but the excavations – which removed major trees, caused mud spillage and sewage problems – were never completed.

A solution to this area awaits, but, in the nine or so short months that

Serena and Michael have lived at the property, much work has been completed. The lawn has been returned to its pristine state, and stone pavers now lead down to it from the tiled terrace through flourishing planted borders. The roses have benefited from severe pruning and attention, and gardener Mick Jones has brought his own passion to the job, clearing, replanting and tending the immense garden as if it were his own.

Beyond the portico entrance and foyer are two entertaining lounges, a dining room, two ensuite double bedrooms with outdoor decking and, at the back of the house, the fully commercial kitchen and laundry. Downstairs are five more ensuite bedrooms, leading out to the rose-

Real heating solutions for comfortable, energy-smart living.



Heat Pump/
Air Conditioning
Hot Water Heating
Ducted Systems

Authorised dealers for:
DAIKIN

Gavin Lowe

HEAT PUMPS AIR CONDITIONING ENERGY SOLUTIONS

For Real Choice of Products, Service and Expertise in creating comfortable environments in which to live and work.

- Design Service from Plans or Home Visit
- Installation, Maintenance and Service
- GE Creditline - conditions apply

Our new showroom is located at 306 Port Hills Road, Hillsborough, Christchurch.
OPEN Monday - Friday 8.30am to 5pm, Saturday 10am to 1pm.
info@gavinlowe.co.nz **Free In Home or Site Quotations**

Phone (03) 337 9584
www.gavinlowe.co.nz





garden terrace.

From the foyer, a grand central stairwell sweeps up to the upper level, where Serena and Michael live, along with Michael's university student daughter, in separate apartment-style quarters. This allows them as much togetherness or space as they require.

"We decided to do this because we'd always lived separately, despite being together for several years, and always enjoyed having our own space," Serena says.

As with all the bedrooms, there were tea and coffee-making facilities here, but Serena had a small utility kitchen area put in, so she can throw together quick, healthy meals after a tough day in court and clean up easily afterwards. The commercial kitchen downstairs and large but intimate dining room are used for dinner parties and big family occasions.

The sunroom in Serena's apartment is literally a sunny room for her small grandchildren, with books, toys and bright colours creating a child-friendly corner within the classic styling of the "apartment".

There's a chandelier (one of four in the house), but it is a mere junior cousin to the grand example hanging over the stairwell, whose multiple prisms absorb and reflect light from the arched and faceted stairwell window.

Downstairs on the main level, the furniture is a mix of new pieces

and Biedermeier or deco reproductions. Serena is particularly fond of some cosy armchairs, with the welcome patina of age, that stayed on after the former elderly residents left. The upright piano in the lounge will eventually be replaced by a baby grand for salon nights of live entertainment, and paintings by local artist Melissa Sharplin in the red dining room echo the art deco mood.

Two small rooms comprise the de-stressing department: a small gym and a movie "theatre", complete with comfortable couches and red, velvety drapes.

Gut reactions have been responsible for many impromptu decisions, sometimes causing regret. But, despite occasional midnight butterflies about the scale of what they've taken on, neither Serena nor Michael have wavered on their commitment to reinstate the grandeur the house and its surroundings deserve.

"The lovely thing about the house is that virtually all the rooms face out to the mountains, so there's a view from almost everywhere," Serena says.

Hackthorne Gardens is now open for business, but more than that, it is Serena and Michael's home and they are happy here.

"The house has a lived-in feel and we actually quite like that."

Whether guests will be able to withstand the magnetic pull of the view to enjoy their immediate surroundings is a moot point. A



UNIQUE DIFFERENCES BUILD GREAT TEAMS!

At Harcourts gold Strowan we have built a boutique real estate team which has succeeded beyond all expectations. As we continue to move forward we are looking for unique sales consultants we can grow. Contact Sara Ashcroft, business owner and manager, in confidence, to discuss what we could do for your business.

Contact Sara today on 3510001 or 021 359 864
or email sara@saraashcroft.co.nz
55 Blighs Road, Strowan,
www.homes4sale.co.nz

