

Randell Cottage

14 St Mary Street



Image: *Charles Collins, 2015*

Summary of heritage significance

- The Randell cottage is a representative example of an early settler dwelling in Wellington. The cottage is of simple design, construction, and has a simple form.
- While the historical associations may appear slight, as this house has not been associated with any events of great importance, its historical significance is associated with its age, the construction, and what it can tell us about the history of Wellington.
- This cottage is a part of a group of similar cottages in Thorndon and on St Mary Street. As a group these buildings are a part of a collection of intact working class buildings in Wellington, giving them an important local significance.

1.0 Outline History

1.1 History¹

Randell's cottage is a representative example of an early settler dwelling in Wellington. The cottage was built by British settlers William and Sarah Randell who arrived in Wellington in 1855. The Randell's initially lived in Ghuznee Street and after spending a brief period in Australia, returned to New Zealand. In 1859 they purchased the leasehold on a cottage on the Wesleyan Reserve in Thorndon, which was subsumed in the adjacent Botanic Garden in 1874. The Randell's lived in the Wesleyan cottage until 1868.

In 1865 William Randell purchased part of Town Acre 624 in Thorndon for £75. The land was clear of native bush but had not been developed, aside from some minor earth moving. The family did not possess the requisite funds to build straight away, so the family remained in the Wesleyan cottage and saved what they could. The five bedroom cottage was probably constructed by William Randell between 1867 and 1868. He sold the Wesleyan Reserve cottage in 1868. All but three of the Randell's ten children had been born by the time that the St Mary Street cottage was ready to be occupied.

William died in 1880 and most of the family were still living in the house. Wellington was feeling the effects of the developing economic depression; however, Sarah Randell managed to retain the cottage and endured the hard times. She remained in the cottage until 1910 when the Randell's association with the cottage came to an end.

Unfortunately it is not possible to determine when the Randell family sold the property as the relevant deed was not located. The cottage was purchased under the Land Transfer Act in 1922 and was owned by William Judd, a plumber, and Charles Chitty, a retired civil servant. The first occupant after the Randells was Herbert Dawson, the caretaker at the nearby Anderson Park. A number of caretakers of parks leased the cottage until 1927, after which confectioner Arthur Clayton took up residency. He purchased the cottage in 1930 and lived there until 1938 when he sold it to Miss Jane Bennett. She occupied the cottage until her death in 1954.

That year Dimitri and Alexandra Pokrowsky purchased the property, and following the death of Dimitri in 1984 sole ownership of the cottage passed to his wife. She died in 1994 having lived in the house for a number of years. The Randell connection to the cottage resurfaced in the form of descendent Beverly Randell who, along with her husband Hugh Price, acquired the property. The cottage was restored to a mid 19th century domestic style, with the floor plan being adhered to as much as was possible. The cottage was gifted to The Randell Cottage Writers Trust Board in 2001 and is now the accommodation for a writer in residence program. The Trust, in conjunction with the French Embassy, offers a yearly residency to one French and one New Zealand writer, who each spend six months in the cottage.

1.2 Timeline of modifications (original plans could not be found)

1867-68	Original construction
c.1870s	Addition
c.1994	Building modifications and restoration

¹ History adapted from: Russell Murray, *Randell Cottage, 14 St Mary Street*, (Wellington City Council: Unpublished report prepared for Plan Change 53, 2005).

1.3 Occupation history

Not assessed

1.4 Architect

Cottage built by William Randell.

2.0 Physical description

2.1 Architecture

Randell Cottage is a simple design, with a simple form of three conjoined boxes, each one room wide. Each part of the house has a steeply pitched gabled roof sheathed in corrugated iron and trimmed at the apex with a finial at each end. Each box is clad in broad clapboards, trimmed with narrow corner boards and finished with large double hung windows and timber doors. On the south side, closest to St Mary Street, one box, an early 1870 addition to the original house, runs parallel with the street and has a large brick chimney rising from the centre. The original house is comprised of the other two boxes and these run perpendicular to the street, with a box gutter between, offset to the west from the addition. At the west a small lean to runs between the original house and the retaining wall. The original kitchen chimney that was in this area has been demolished.

2.2 Materials

- Timber
- Corrugated iron roof

2.3 Setting

Randell's Cottage is located mid-way up the steep slope of St Mary Street on a small level site cut from the hill side. There is a large concrete retaining wall on the west boundary supporting the neighbouring property to the west and the land falls away on the other sides. St Mary Street is part of a neighbourhood of old houses, in which Randell's cottage is one of the oldest known of the original houses on the street.

The house is set away from the street beyond an open front lawn. There is brick paving and low gardens around the perimeter of the cottage. There is a small shed in the north west corner of the site below the perimeter wall, and the remains of the original laundry and privy may be found here. The house is bordered by a period garden that includes survivors of the original garden – roses and tree fern – and is otherwise planted in a 1870s style.

The street is sharply sloped, giving the house and garden an open aspect to the north and west; to the east the adjoining houses rise above the retaining wall, and are back-grounded with the green slopes of Tinakori Hill.

3.0 Sources

Murray, Russell. *Randell Cottage, 14 St Mary Street*. Wellington City Council: Unpublished report, prepared for Plan Change 53, 2005.

4.0 Criteria for assessing cultural heritage significance

Cultural heritage values

Aesthetic Value:

Architectural: *Does the item have architectural or artistic value for characteristics that may include its design, style, era, form, scale, materials, colour, texture, patina of age, quality of space, craftsmanship, smells, and sounds?*

The Randell cottage is a representative example of an early settler dwelling in Wellington. The cottage is of simple design, construction, and has a simple form.

Townscape: *Does the item have townscape value for the part it plays in defining a space or street; providing visual interest; its role as a landmark; or the contribution it makes to the character and sense of place of Wellington?*

The garden setting of the cottage contributes significantly to the sense of place and character of St Mary Street, providing visual interest to the steep site.

Group: *Is the item part of a group of buildings, structures, or sites that taken together have coherence because of their age, history, style, scale, materials, or use?*

This cottage is a part of a group of similar cottages in Thorndon and on St Mary Street. As a group these buildings are a part of a collection of intact working class buildings in Wellington, giving them an important local significance.

Historic Value:

Association: *Is the item associated with an important person, group, or organisation?*

Association: *Is the item associated with an important historic event, theme, pattern, phase, or activity?*

While the historical associations may appear slight, as this house has not been associated with any events of great importance, its historical significance is associated with its age, the construction, and what it can tell us about the history of Wellington.

Scientific Value:

Archaeological: *Does the item have archaeological value for its ability to provide scientific information about past human activity?*

This dwelling was constructed pre 1900 making it an archaeological site. It is part of the NZAA Central City Archaeological Area R27/270.

Educational: *Does the item have educational value for what it can demonstrate about aspects of the past?*

Technological: *Does the item have technological value for its innovative or important construction methods or use of materials?*

Social Value:

Public esteem: *Is the item held in high public esteem?*

Symbolic, commemorative, traditional, spiritual: Does the item have symbolic, commemorative, traditional, spiritual or other cultural value for the community who has used and continues to use it?

Identity/Sense of place/Continuity:

Is the item a focus of community, regional, or national identity?

Does the item contribute to sense of place or continuity?

This house contributes to the sense of place and continuity on St Mary Street due to the retention of its original features and its long standing place on the street.

Sentiment/Connection: *Is the item a focus of community sentiment and connection?*

Level of cultural heritage significance

Rare: *Is the item rare, unique, unusual, seminal, influential, or outstanding?*

Representative: *Is the item a good example of the class it represents?*

This house is representative of the types of workers dwellings from the turn of the century. It is constructed in materials, and using techniques, that were common to the period.

Authentic: *Does the item have authenticity or integrity because it retains significant fabric from the time of its construction or from later periods when important additions or modifications were carried out?*

Randell Cottage retains a significant amount of authenticity having had few exterior modifications.

Local/Regional/National/International

Is the item important for any of the above characteristics at a local, regional, national, or international level?

This cottage is of local significance due to its long history, the contribution that it makes to the character and sense of place on St Mary Street, its exterior authenticity, and as a part of a group of cottages in Thorndon from the late 19th century.

5.0 Appendix

Research checklist (desktop)

Source	Y/N	Comments
1995 Heritage Inventory		
2001 Non-Residential heritage Inventory		
WCC Records – building file		
WCC Records – grant files (earthquake strengthening, enhancement of heritage values)		
Research notes from 2001 Non-Residential heritage Inventory		
Plan change?		
Heritage Area Report		
Heritage Area Spreadsheet		
Heritage items folder (electronic)		
HPT website		
HPT files		
Conservation Plan		
Searched Heritage Library (CAB 2)		

Background research

Insert any relevant background information into this section. This may include:

- *Additional plans, such as those for alterations*
- *Chunks of text from other sources such as Cyclopedia of NZ, Papers Past*
- *Additional images*