

# THE UNHOLY ROW OVER CHRISTCHURCH CATHEDRAL

Two years after an earthquake devastated the city which shares its name, ChristChurch Cathedral still languishes behind security fencing. Amanda Cropp investigates the rancorous politics behind the wire.





**This aerial photograph shows ChristChurch Cathedral on February 20, 2012, nearly a year after the 6.3 quake.**

MARTY MELVILLE/APPI/GETTY IMAGES

The once-soaring bell tower is little more than a stump following demolition last year.

A lone pigeon struts along a steel gantry beside the gaping hole in the cathedral’s west wall. Inside his mates are probably pooping over the organ, the broken pulpit and the intricately carved kauri screen behind the high altar.

Thanks to hastily thrown drop-cloths, the effigy of the city’s first bishop, Henry Harper, is unsullied by bird droppings, but with other precious cathedral artefacts lying unprotected and irretrievable, a significant reduction in the \$5 million contents insurance payment is a distinct possibility.

Strengthening work is credited with preventing wholesale collapse of the building. The ridge line of the roof looks straight as a gun barrel and, from a distance, the eastern end housing the chancel appears in reasonable nick. However, during a close-up tour of the exterior with a church engineer, the commentary is far from positive.

Stuart Oliver, technical director for Holmes Consulting Group, points out cracks wide enough to admit a hand. Orange plastic “tell tales” tacked to stonework chart the “old girls” desperate dance through thousands of

aftershocks, and in the nave he says the bottoms of the tall Oamaru stone columns have rounded off as a result of their rock’n’ rolling.

In the visitor centre, smelly black water laps at door handles in the basement and around the corner, in an area where Oliver is not prepared to take me, someone has spray-painted offensive comments about the church. The once-soaring bell tower is little more than a stump following demolition last year and the mangled cross that topped the spire lies in state in a black-lined display case at the Quake City museum exhibit in the Re:Start container mall.

Neatly packaged for tourists, the accompanying blurb neglects to mention the bitter battle over the future of the city landmark because, a museum staffer tells me, the picture keeps changing.

Legal action by the Great Christchurch Buildings Trust has halted Anglican Church plans to deconstruct the cathedral to window-sill level. An appeal over one aspect of the interim judgement is to be heard on April 18, and another two potential litigants are in the wings (see box on page 122).



**Victoria Matthews after her appointment as bishop in 2008. Her hiring marked a departure for the church: her four male predecessors had all previously served as deans of ChristChurch Cathedral, whereas Matthews arrived from Canada.**

MARTIN HUNTER

Christchurch has a reputation for unholy rows over heritage buildings but the debate over ChristChurch Cathedral has polarised the city like no other civic battle in recent memory.

When the Red Zone cordon was lifted for eight days following deconsecration of the cathedral, 140,000 people ventured into the square to view the battered building. Some, like former cathedral chorister Brent Rawstron, want it restored. Some would prefer it was left as a ruin, or rebuilt with a mix of old and new elements. Others say raze it and build a modern cathedral that reflects the new city. Many are just fed up with the endless wrangling.

Bishop Victoria Matthews, recruited from Canada two and a half years before the February quake, wants an inspiring new cathedral that “speaks to the past but looks to a future”.

The cathedral was the centrepiece of a colonial settlement with its roots firmly in the Church of England tradition, and Christchurch was recognised as a city only when Bishop Harper turned up with the letters patent to say so (at the time, city status was determined either by population or by

being the seat of a bishop).

Rawstron repeats a common refrain when he says the current bishop fails to understand the building’s symbolic importance. “It’s more than a church to Christchurch, it’s our McDonald’s golden arches, it’s our [city council] logo... it’s what Christchurch is known for throughout the world. It’s like taking down the Sydney Harbour Bridge or the Auckland Sky Tower. It’s like saying we’ll take down the Eiffel Tower because it’s got a bit rusty and we don’t like it anymore.”

Canterbury University associate professor in art history Ian Lochhead, an expert on early New Zealand architecture, goes even further. “In terms of Pakeha culture, this is the greatest heritage loss ever in the country’s history.”

For almost 40 years, the Wizard of Christchurch held forth in Cathedral Square from a ladder stored in the cathedral porch. He was so incensed by church plans he cast a spell to save the building, and publicly declared in a newspaper advertisement that the bishop was cracked and should be demolished forthwith. (Much to his annoyance, an overexcited TV reporter interpreted the proclamation as a

possible death threat, but the Advertising Standards Authority rejected complaints about it.)

Even though the cathedral decision is strictly a matter for the local diocese, the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Queen have been inundated with letters pleading for them to intervene.

Retired bishop of Christchurch David Coles, now a parish priest in Central Otago, was also lobbied but refuses to publicly take sides. “My regular response is to say that I’m a bit like Manuel in *Fawlty Towers*: ‘I know nothing, I come from Barcelona.’”

So how did it come to this? Eight months after suffering serious damage in the February quake, the cathedral was classed as a dangerous building by the Canterbury Earthquake Recovery Authority (CERA), which ordered that it be demolished “to the extent





Above and top right: The cathedral in its former glory.

necessary to remove the hazards”.

Faced with the threat of CERA taking over the demolition work and charging a project management fee if it didn’t get a move on, the church considered three options: maximum retention, controlled demolition to sill level (between two and three metres), and an in-between scheme deconstructing the nave but saving the largely intact eastern end.

The decision-making process involved four church bodies: the cathedral project group, set up to review options for the cathedral; the cathedral chapter, which administers the cathedral; the Church Property Trustees, legal owners of all diocesan buildings; and the



standing committee of the diocesan synod. When the Anglican Church announced its deconstruction plans on March 1, 2012, it emphasised the high costs and the unacceptable risks of restoration in a press release that made no fewer than 11 references to safety, injury risk, and the cathedral being a dangerous building. With most of the cathedral still standing, Mark Belton just didn’t buy it. He phoned around engineers and heritage experts to get their take on prospects for fixing the cathedral and, without exception, they said it was possible. “There was this credibility gap and that’s what fired me.” Although an “unbeliever”, Belton attended evensong at the cathedral three times a week to hear his second-generation chorister grandson sing. “I loved the theatre and the history.” He took five weeks off from his job as director of a carbon-trading company to kickstart the Restore ChristChurch Cathedral group and since then has put in well over 700 hours’ unpaid to lobby the Anglican Church, the Christchurch City Council, and politicians. A campaign rally drew 4000 people. Another 4000-plus signed a petition calling for restoration – among them well-known Cantabrians such as rich-lister Humphrey Rolleston, fashion designer Barbara Lee, entrepreneur Mike Pero, writer Margaret Mahy, broadcaster Mike Yardley, and business-man Richard Ballantyne of Ballantynes department store. Descendants of the city’s English founders lent their support, as did many others with an abiding affection for the category-one building, which is rated 46th of 5600 sites



on the Historic Places Trust national register. Belton scored a PR coup when he and GNS Science’s chief seismic engineer Andrew King circulated a petition among members of the New Zealand Society of Earthquake Engineering attending a conference in Christchurch. More than 100 engineers signed a statement saying it was technically feasible for the cathedral to be safely restored to meet all earthquake code requirements. Belton and King (acting in a private capacity) took that petition to a meeting with Earthquake Minister Gerry Brownlee. Belton suggested splitting restoration costs between the church, the city council and the government with each of those groups stumping up \$15 million, covering the balance with public fund-raising – a solution that, so far, has gone nowhere. About the time Belton’s group was established, an unlikely alliance of former political foes Jim Anderton and Philip Burdon agreed to co-chair the newly formed Great Christchurch Buildings Trust (GCBT), which

was established to prevent the unnecessary destruction of quake-damaged heritage buildings such as the cathedral. Mindful of being accused of elitism for focusing on just one well-known building, the trust is also developing affordable housing and cost-effective ways of remediating quake-damaged residential land. Burdon, a former National cabinet minister and co-founder of Meadow Mushrooms, is a member of the order of canon-almoners, an honorary title bestowed on citizens of “good standing” who have made substantial financial donations to ChristChurch Cathedral. He sees Bishop Victoria Matthews as well-meaning but misguided. “In no way is she a charlatan; she believes in what she’s doing, but it’s a very one-dimensional and intolerant perspective on which she is not prepared to compromise in any shape or form.” Left-winger Anderton stood unsuccessfully against Christchurch mayor Bob Parker in the last local government elections after retiring from Parliament, and is a Roman

“Working-class hero” Jim Anderton and former National cabinet minister Philip Burdon have formed an unlikely alliance to fight the cathedral’s demolition.

Catholic. “Someone said, ‘We can’t look like the blue-rinse brigade from Fendalton, we need some working-class heroes as well,’ so they called me and I agreed to go.” For Anderton, it’s been quite an eye-opener working with a group of powerful people prepared to dig deep for the cause. The GCBT has spent \$100,000 on legal fees, half of which Burdon has covered personally, and he says he will consider giving \$1 million in seed funding to restore the cathedral. Other GCBT trustees are retired Christchurch City Missioner David Morrell, fundraising consultant and former Cathedral Canon Graham Brady, businessman Mike Norris, and Peter Graham, a retired lawyer and writer. Graham first approached the church property trustees last May with an 11-point plan



to help the diocese restore the cathedral “as far as is practically possible”.

The GCBT did not seek an exact replica and accepted alterations might be needed for engineering and safety reasons. Major engineering and construction companies were willing to help, Graham said, and the trust was prepared to bring in overseas experts, organise project management, fund-raise, and source insurance cover.

The bishop thanked the trust for its offer and said the church was working with architects Warren and Mahoney on plans for a new building.

Angered at this rebuff, Graham responded with a missive later described by the church trustees as “unhelpfully aggressive”. The letter said the church’s “extraordinarily high-handed attitude” would “never be forgotten or forgiven”, and it would “pay a heavy price for its secrecy, arrogance and ingratitude when the time comes to solicit donations for a new cathedral or other smaller churches, or find worshippers to fill them”.

The GCBT then commissioned an independent engineering review panel (IERP) to come up with a make-safe plan for the cathedral. This plan, pulled together in just two weeks, proposed using hydraulics to push a shield into the cathedral, similar to the siege engines used to breach medieval castles, to protect workers from any falling debris.

When church engineers rejected the IERP solution on cost and safety grounds, the trust offered to come back with a more detailed version of the plan, which it presented last month.

Anderton says the GCBT bent over backwards trying to negotiate with the church – even agreeing to pay church engineers to review the IERP plan (a \$4000 cheque sent to Holmes Consulting Group was returned uncashed). He says the church was unwilling to allow its engineers to get around the table with GCBT engineers for a frank discussion of the options, and that lack of co-operation ultimately led to the ongoing legal action. The church denies it was obstructive, saying that at no time did it restrict access to engineers or engineering information.

But Anderton says from the earliest days there was a group within the Anglican Church who saw the quake as an opportunity to remove a building he believes they saw as outmoded, outdated, costly and inconvenient.

He bases that claim on information revealed in minutes of chapter meetings disclosed during the discovery process for the court case. They show that within three



BAILY & MOORE

## Controversial Cleric

Opinions about Bishop Victoria Matthews are as divided as those about the cathedral.

Supporters hail Victoria Matthews as a strong woman with a demanding job, ferociously intelligent, deeply spiritual, and a scintillating dinner party guest. Critics within the parishes and heritage groups describe her as intransigent. The more charitable of those suggest she found herself at the centre of a perfect storm – wrong person, wrong time, wrong place.

When first approached for an interview, Matthews said she was keen to talk, but her busy schedule meant she couldn’t fit me in for three months. We eventually met eight weeks later at the makeshift diocesan offices in St Peter’s Church Hall in upper Riccarton.

Matthews’ office, the size of a walk-in wardrobe, occupies a corner of the church-hall stage and she has had every reason to follow the advice of the “Keep Calm and Carry On” poster on the wall.

Her quake-damaged St Albans home was demolished in 2011 and she now shares a sleepout in the garden with Jethro, an Anatolian shepherd dog brought over from Canada. “He’s like a Labrador on steroids.”

Media coverage of the cathedral debate means she is still readily recognisable in tramping boots and jeans, so instead of heading into the hills over summer she spent eight days in

Melbourne to escape public attention.

Matthews believes the flak she has copped over the cathedral is partly a grief reaction. “We’ve all lost so much... I have done my very best to remain compassionate and pastoral towards those who have been angry about what has happened.”

Regarded as a high flyer within the church, Matthews has master’s degrees in divinity and theology, did mission work in Haiti, was Bishop of Edmonton for a decade, and has served on important Anglican bodies such as a taskforce studying the controversial idea of same-sex marriage.

A breast cancer survivor, she twice came close to being made Primate of the Anglican Church in Canada, but a revelation during a pilgrimage on the 800km El Camino trail in Spain to Santiago de Compostela led her in an unexpected new direction. “I was praying and I suddenly knew that it was God’s will for me to return to Canada. I would be nominated for the primacy [for a second time], but I would not be elected, and I must then resign from the [Edmonton] diocese and wait for what was next.”

The “what next” was an email from New Zealand inviting her to apply for the job as bishop of Christchurch in a country she had visited briefly on a

tramping holiday many years earlier.

Her appointment in 2008 was a major departure from recent practice: she was a foreigner and her four male predecessors had all served as deans of ChristChurch Cathedral. Those responsible for her appointment didn’t actually meet her face to face until she arrived to take up her new job – like all other nominees for bishop, she submitted a video interview to the electoral synod.

According to an article in the *Anglican Journal*, the diocese was looking for a leader who could help heal longstanding divisions along theological lines and on social and political issues.

Matthews says she was warned from the outset that the Christchurch diocese was the most divided in the country. “It has always been fractious.”

Before her arrival, the design of the cathedral visitor centre caused major angst, as did the inclusion of words from a Sanskrit prayer on a cathedral altar cloth, but nothing remotely approaching the heat generated by the cathedral issue.

Clergy who I talked to were reluctant to speak on the record about their boss. Peter Beck, the high-profile dean of ChristChurch Cathedral who resigned in late 2011 to become a city councillor, wouldn’t be drawn on his relationship with the bishop, except to say they had their differences.

Mike Hawke, who resigned as the vicar of St Christopher’s Avonhead to work for the Anglican Missions Board, says clergy have muzzled themselves, effectively, out of fear they will lose their jobs in a post-quake restructuring of the diocese which could involve a significant number of church sales and parish mergers.

Hawke says in Canada the Anglican Church is much more autocratic and Matthews’ tendency to micromanage doesn’t go down well here. “It’s a cultural thing. In Canada when a bishop says ‘Jump!’ you say ‘How high?’ In New Zealand, when a bishop says ‘Jump!’ we say, ‘How, why and where?’”

There is discontent too at parish level about the speedy demolition of some damaged churches, delays in doing repairs, lack of transparency over financial matters and the amount of time and money expended on the cathedral debate.

One clergyman observed that



BAILY & MOORE

**Bishop Matthew’s quake-damaged St Albans home was demolished in 2011 and she now shares a sleepout in the garden with Jethro, an Anatolian shepherd dog.**

parishioners who had been going to church all their lives don’t go any more in sheer protest. “People in the church are angry, and they are voting with their feet and their wallets.”

But Matthews has plenty of loyal supporters and Rev Brian Thomas, who seconded her nomination for bishop, says her decisiveness was what the diocese needed. “I know she can be demanding, but I was close enough to see the pressures on her and I’m full of admiration for her courage under fire. I have never seen her blink when many others would.

“Her opponents probably thought she’d come to heel over the cathedral – or else take to her heels – but they’re up against a woman who came halfway round the world and she’s not a quitter.”

Mike Hawke says in Canada the Anglican Church is much more autocratic and Matthews’ tendency to micromanage doesn’t go down well here.



months of the February 2011 quake, the chapter discussed the merits of a new cathedral and the need to farewell the old cathedral before a new one could be started.

In December 2011, there was more discussion about the old building’s merits and drawbacks. For example, it offered a sense of peace and holiness and was well-crafted, but it lacked sufficient seating and a private chapel, acoustics were poor and pillars disrupted sightlines. A list of 24 advantages of a new cathedral included the opportunity to provide hospitality to tourists, worship “in the round”, and a children’s space.

Chapter minutes from a meeting shortly before the official deconstruction announcement note that members “would not be unwilling” to accept “total destruction to ground level”.

Bishop Matthews dismisses suggestions that quake damage was a convenient excuse to forge ahead with a new cathedral more suited to modern forms of worship. Until the December 23 aftershock in 2011 caused further damage, they had every intention of trying to make the building safe, she says, and discussions about a new cathedral were just brainstorming.

By her own admission, Matthews’ former episcopal seat in Edmonton, Canada, looked like a brick shoebox on its side, but that doesn’t mean she isn’t a fan of ChristChurch’s gothic revival splendour. “I actually really love gothic... This is not about liking or disliking a cathedral at all. It’s about a catastrophic event and trying to look at how one must live in the future should something comparable happen again.”

How much say the secular community should have over this high-profile piece of church real estate is a sore point. Matthews says the “un-churched” (her word for non-churchgoers) need to understand the church’s primary mission is “not to be a custodian of heritage buildings, nor to preserve beautiful architecture”.

In the past, the church relied heavily on public generosity to fund building of the cathedral and maintain it. In 2006, when \$8 million was raised for choir scholarships and restoration/strengthening work, fundraiser Graeme Brady ran the campaign. He says only about \$365,000 came directly from the cathedral congregation. The Lottery Grants board gave \$600,000 and the Canterbury Community Trust \$1.2 million.

Over the years, the Christchurch City Council has contributed \$3.8 million to the cathedral via a grant for electrical and building work and a \$240,000 annual grant for



## What About the Other One?

The Roman Catholic Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament was even more severely damaged than its Anglican counterpart, but its post-quake treatment has attracted a good deal less controversy. With dangerous sections of the building removed, the site was made safe while the Catholic Church reviewed its options. Full restoration is estimated at well over \$120 million and the most likely scenario at this stage is to save two walls as a quake relic, including the columned front entrance and the Virgin Mary statue that rotated 180 degrees in the quake to face outwards towards the city.

use of the building for civic functions and its role as a tourist attraction. (In contrast, council heritage grants to the Roman Catholic Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament amounted to just \$595,400.)

Matthews rejects the notion that donors can dictate how the church should manage its property. “If you give money to a charity and five or 10 years later that charity changes focus slightly, I’m not sure that you actually can claim to have a strong say [in how it’s run].”

That does not sit well with those who believe the church actively encouraged a sense of public ownership through its marketing with regular slots on RadioLive referring to the cathedral as the “heart and soul” of the city, a place for everybody, not just worshippers. Reg Garters, an Anglican lay minister and former CEO of the southern branch of the New Zealand Institute of Management, says there was an “Oh well, get stuffed, we own the church” arrogance towards the people of Christchurch.

Garters resigned from the cathedral chapter last year after 21 years’ service because

he did not accept the building was as dangerous as the church claimed, and he felt the decision to deconstruct was rushed through without thoroughly investigating other alternatives. “It’s too easy for people who’ve made a decision to look for facts that suit their decision, and that’s where we’ve got problems.”

**IT’S TELLING THAT** for all the conflict over the cathedral, the one point experts agree on is that the building can be saved.

A geotechnical report by Tonkin and Taylor found the land under the building had a low risk of liquefaction in future quakes and there were no obvious signs of settlement of the foundations.

The Historic Places Trust strongly believes it’s possible to retain significant elements of the original building, as does a former director of Holmes Consulting Group (HCG) who was involved in major seismic work on the cathedral in the late 1990s.

Grant Wilkinson supervised the installation of steel bracing in the roof, concrete sheer walls and other strengthening – without which, he says, the cathedral would be a pile of rubble. Now a director of engineering company Ruamoko Solutions, Wilkinson highly regards the work of his former colleagues at HCG, who, he says, are in a difficult position. “It’s fair to say the Holmes guys are frustrated as hell because they know it can be bloody saved but they’ve been totally hemmed in by their client... When you read the Holmes reports they’re not saying it’s a lost cause... but they’ve been under instruction to give us maximum and minimum retention [options], so they’ve come up with that. Their hands are tied in the whole process.”

In an affidavit sworn for the court case, HCG principal engineer John Hare said maximum retention and strengthening to 100 per cent of the current building code was possible, but this “purely engineering perspective” ignores the fact there are other considerations involved in the decision-making process.

Safety is a high priority for the bishop. “Of course we need to remember the history and importance of the cathedral – it’s incredibly important to this city. So is the safety of every human being, and when those two things are put side by side, safety has to come first.”

Although no one died in or around the cathedral, three men removing an organ were killed when the already quake-damaged Durham St Methodist church collapsed on February 22, 2011. A few months later, a worker removing windows from St John’s

Church in Latimer Square was lucky to escape serious injury when he was buried under stone work that collapsed in an aftershock.

So engineers were understandably risk-averse when it came to putting workers anywhere near the cathedral. The south porch turret and loose stone work were removed, and the steel buttress at the main entrance to the cathedral, erected primarily to protect search and rescue crews looking for bodies in the rubble, was left in place as a prop.

Hare says more evaluation was needed before they went too much further, and money was an issue too. “We had to stop when it became clear that the church was unclear what the insurance position was and therefore how [contractors doing the work] would be paid.”

Engineer Stefano Pampanin, president of the New Zealand Society for Earthquake Engineering, is still flabbergasted so little was done to prop up the building to prevent further damage in continuing aftershocks and to pave the way for eventual restoration. He says that without cushioning, the steel support simply acted as a battering ram.

An Italian, Pampanin moved to Christchurch 11 years ago. He is an associate professor of structural engineering at the University of Canterbury and was a member of the Great Christchurch Buildings Trust’s Independent Engineering Review Panel. His speciality is seismic design and strengthening of concrete buildings. As a master’s student, he did computer modelling for remedial work on the leaning tower of Pisa, and he visited the Italian town of L’Aquila following the 2009 quake that wrecked thousands of historic buildings.

Pampanin says the number-one rule with quake-damaged heritage buildings is that intervention should be reversible and that certainly wasn’t the case with the demolition of the ChristChurch Cathedral bell tower.

Using a YouTube clip, he illustrates how quickly specialist Italian work crews shored up L’Aquila’s Anime Sante church, erecting a soft protective latticework of timber and airbags strapped in place with steel bands.

An interlocking steel structure was inserted inside the badly damaged tower and opened up like the ribs of an umbrella to support the remaining walls until a lightweight temporary roof was built. The make-safe process was completed in time to celebrate Christmas mass in 2011.

The engineering review panel proposes a similar approach for the cathedral, erecting a skeleton of steel framing inside and outside the building, then clamping the two



**Stefano Pampanin, president of the New Zealand Society for Earthquake Engineering, is astonished so little was done to prop up the building to prevent further damage from aftershocks. Without cushioning, he says, the steel support shown here, in March 2011, simply acted as a battering ram.**



**Above: Specialist Italian crews shored up the Anime Sante church in L’Aquila, Italy, badly damaged by a quake in 2009. The make-safe process was completed in time to celebrate Christmas mass in 2011. Left: Unlike in Christchurch, larger sacred objects in the Italian earthquake were protected as soon as possible.**



together to stabilise it. Workers would always operate inside a protected area, avoiding the need to run to a safe haven in an aftershock.

It bothers Pampanin that the church appeared so unwilling to accept outside help. In defending its decision not to seek international expertise, a church press release said Holmes Consulting Group engineers “know all there is to know” about the cathedral. Pampanin counters with a medical analogy and says doctors, no matter how experienced they are or how well they know their patients, still seek second opinions from colleagues to ascertain the best and newest treatments available. “Monumental buildings are really complex patients.”

Hare says his company has received quite a few second opinions, “perhaps not all well-researched or informed”, but is “open to considered input” provided it addresses the church’s needs in terms of cost and timeliness. “I understand the church cannot afford to have the cathedral in an unusable state indefinitely, even with a temporary shoring solution, while a final solution is resolved.”

As well as a long record of working on local heritage buildings, Holmes has 13 years’ experience seismically upgrading historic buildings in quake-prone San Francisco, and Hare bristles at the implication that Kiwi engineers are somehow incapable of dealing with the challenges presented by the cathedral.

But according to Win Clark, an engineering consultant for the Historic Places Trust New Zealand, engineers could learn a lot about strategies for repairing quake-damaged rubble core masonry buildings through the NIKER project (new integrated knowledge-based approaches to the protection of cultural heritage from earthquake induced risk). The NIKER research involves academic institutions in Europe, the UK, Egypt and Israel and in April the project leader, Professor Claudio Modena from Italy’s University of Padova, speaks at an earthquake engineering conference in Wellington before visiting Christchurch.

Clark says ChristChurch Cathedral was built over a period of 40 years and the quality of materials and standard of workmanship – depending heavily on how much money was in the kitty at the time – was not always that flash. For that reason, damage across the building is variable and in-depth investigations will be required before any restoration begins.

Inner and outer layers of stone sandwich the rubble core – “a very merry mix” of waste

## Contrary to popular belief, the Christchurch diocese of the Anglican Church is not a “wealthy institution”.

rock and bricks – and the mud mortar flung over it does not necessarily contain cement.

Clark says that if an earthquake originated from the Alpine Fault, the repaired building would have to withstand a lengthy period of shaking. “Rather than going on for four seconds like it did in February, it could go on for minutes. If it’s shaking for that period of time you get the shake-down effect with the rubble masonry, so you get far more damage and potential total collapse.”

However, even badly damaged walls can be strengthened *in situ* by injecting grout into the rubble core to stiffen it. “It looks like weak tea; it’s as runny as that because you need it to penetrate the very fine spaces. Then you drill horizontally and fix in transverse [steel] ties and a whole heap of other interventions. What you’re doing is taking that loose material and giving it integrity so it can take the shaking without crumbling and falling apart. Tying all that fabric together is going to be a bit of a mission. It can be done but it’s expensive.”

Therein lays the problem. In Italy, the government helps meet the cost of securing and restoration work on quake-damaged heritage buildings. Here, it is up to property owners.

The Historic Places Trust cannot compel owners to carry out stabilisation work to prevent further damage and the trust’s southern regional manager Rob Hall says that while limited financial assistance was provided to shore up some damaged Christchurch buildings, the Anglican Church did not apply for funding.

**CHURCH PROPERTY** Trustees chief operations manager Gavin Holley says that, contrary to popular belief, the Christchurch diocese of the Anglican Church is not a “wealthy institution”.

The former head of Ngai Tahu Seafood took up his position six months after the February quakes, which, he says, left the church in a “precarious financial position”. It lost revenue from two commercial buildings destroyed in the CBD, and \$444,447

annual income from the cathedral visitor centre. Three-quarters of the diocese’s 210 buildings were damaged or destroyed. Seventeen have been demolished and 15 churches remain unusable.

Last year, the diocese’s insurer ANSVAR quit the New Zealand market after being overwhelmed with quake claims. Now operating as ACS, it entered into a scheme of arrangement with policy holders to govern how it would pay insurance claims in the event it became insolvent.

Irrespective of ACS’ potential insolvency, Holley says insurance payments for the parishes are expected to fall \$30 million short of the amount needed for repairs. The church must also find \$12 million to upgrade buildings assessed as quake vulnerable. Some years ago the cathedral opted for “functional” rather than full replacement insurance cover to reduce premiums. Despite previous quake damage to the spire and the risks posed by the Alpine Fault, Holley says the possibility of a devastating earthquake was never considered. “Why would you insure a stone building for full replacement cost when perhaps you thought that if anything was going to happen it would be a bit of a fire that would partially damage the building?”

The insurance payment for the cathedral was \$38.9 million, but Holley expects to spend more than \$10 million of the insurance money on consultancy fees, make-safe work, deconstruction and a temporary cathedral in Latimer Square, leaving just \$28.5 million for repair or rebuild of the Cathedral Square building. On top of that, court action has proved costly with the church spending \$96,000 on legal fees last year, with another \$52,000 invested in communications-public relations advice.

According to a 2012 quantity surveyor’s report prepared for the church, the GCBT restoration proposal would cost at least \$109 million and could blow out to \$187 million, versus \$85 million for deconstruction and rebuilding. The extra cost was a step too far for the bishop, who said it would be “bad stewardship” and “unfaithful to the mission of the diocese” to make such a large financial commitment to one structure. Borrowing is not an option because a building cannot be consecrated unless it is debt-free.

As far as heritage advocates are concerned, this dire financial situation makes the bishop’s decision to turn down the offer of a global pro bono fundraising campaign all the more inexplicable.

PLEASE TURN TO PAGE 120



Immediately after the February quake, fund-raising consultant Graeme Brady made the offer on behalf of Everald Compton International, a company specialising in major fundraising for institutions.

The bishop explained at that stage the Church Property Trustees were confident insurance would cover the cost of cathedral repairs, and it was only after the June after-shock they realised it would be insufficient.

During a long career with Compton, Brady raised more than \$500 million worldwide for the likes of Westminster Cathedral and St John's College Cambridge, and he says a campaign of the magnitude required for the cathedral would normally carry a \$500,000 fee.

Within two weeks of the quake, he and his staff had a website ready to go and, with the blessing of Dean Peter Beck, were setting up fundraising committees in London, the US, Canada and Australia. It all came to a grinding halt when the bishop made it clear any money raised must go to the whole diocese so other damaged churches could benefit too.

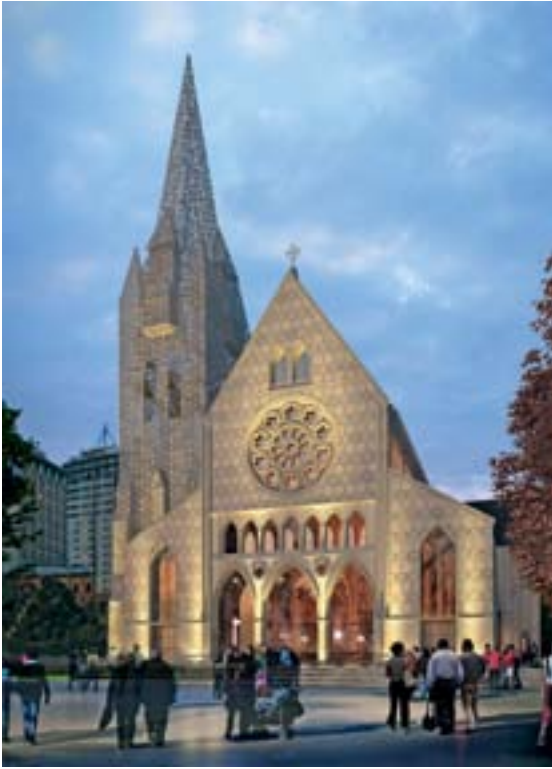
Brady said that approach would not work because donors like to know exactly where their money is going and people willing to give to the cathedral wouldn't necessarily give money to the diocese. "We could have raised hundreds of millions of dollars, but the whole thing just fizzed... The bishop was fixated on her one grand fund for everyone."

When British billionaire Hamish Ogston offered \$4 million to repair the cathedral, his terms were not initially accepted by the bishop. The pledge was only confirmed after Dean Beck negotiated an agreement allowing Ogston to target his donation exclusively for restoration, not a rebuild.

After spurning the earlier offer from Brady, the church has since sought advice from another international fundraising consultancy and a church report also talks of seeking online donations, crowd-funding through social media, also targeting sister city connections and expat New Zealanders.

Last year, the bishop was part of a five-strong church team that visited a dozen cathedrals in the UK, Europe and the US to gather ideas for a new structure, taking in the magnificent Sagrada Familia in Spain, the avant-garde Le Corbusier-designed Notre Dame du Ronchamp in France, and the old-ruins-new-building mix of Coventry Cathedral in England.

As a result of the court case, the church reconsidered its position on deconstruction and just as *North & South* went to press it released three options for ChristChurch Cathedral: full restoration (\$104-\$221 mil-



**Above:** Designs by church architects Warren and Mahoney include a new contemporary cathedral (left and centre) representing hands clasped in prayer and (right) a more traditional structure built of timber. Both incorporate the iconic rose window in the west wall facing Cathedral Square.

**Left:** Sir Miles Warren's design, which uses lightweight and cheaper materials. **Below:** Mayor Bob Parker envisions a crystal palace, with the ruins encased in a "loving embrace" of glass.



lion); a traditional timber structure similar to the existing cathedral but with a lattice-work tower (\$85-\$181 million); and a contemporary new cathedral (\$56-\$74 million).

The church did not indicate its preferred option, which will be announced after a period of public consultation, but the contemporary design by church architects Warren and Mahoney is the only one that meets all of the church's 19 requirements in terms of seismic safety, atmosphere, acoustics, etc, and it could be operational within a decade.

The other two options could take from five to 22 years to complete, and the church rates restoration as the most financially risky because it expects difficulties raising enough money to cover the insurance shortfall.

It has already been presented with a much cheaper alternative by canon-almoner and architect Sir Miles Warren, working independently of his old architectural firm. His \$18 million design has a wooden interior made of stained pine, a lightweight copper roof replacing the current heavy slates, and the rose window cast in a special white cement instead of Oamaru stone.

Mayor Bob Parker turned architect too, promoting a sort of crystal palace encasing the ruins in a "loving embrace" of glass, with the temperature inside kept at the same temperature it was when the quake struck. He says that, from the outside, the old cathedral was "never the most beautiful or imposing cathedral" and he has no desire to see it resurrected. "This is a great trauma

Mayor Bob Parker promotes a sort of crystal palace encasing the ruins in a "loving embrace" of glass, with the temperature inside kept at the same temperature it was when the quake struck.

we have been though and it is entirely appropriate that a new symbol arises that's a combination of the old and new... because the world has changed."

Parker, a staunch Victoria Matthews' supporter, says her "shabby treatment" shows up the "dark underbelly" of the city psyche. "She has had to operate within the bounds of her faith and her deep personal beliefs, and that should be respected. You have to separate the argument from the often misplaced passions of those arguing. It's not legitimate to grind a person down because you disagree with their view."

He blames the city's establishment for wanting to preserve the old order and keep the cathedral as a symbol of the way the city was run by business and union cliques – an obvious dig at Burdon and Anderton.

Matthews likewise feels the debate has become a power struggle with the old boys' network determined to get its way. "They've tried to take the decision out of our hands and this is largely about who calls the shots in Christchurch... There's outrage because I have not done what I was told to do, so it's a subtle – sometimes not so subtle – game."

Mark Belton says the Christchurch establishment is definitely not pulling the strings and those supporting restoration run the whole gamut of the community. "The fish-monger at the Lyttelton Farmers Market is a Maori woman and when she sees me she says, 'How's that cathedral? You'd better bloody save it!'"

But there's no escaping the political element to the debate and Burdon says the government should bear that in mind for next year's general election.

"There's only one certainty: if the government is seen to be a party to the demolition of the cathedral it will antagonise a significant proportion of its own conservative support base. There's a fragile National vote in Christchurch and this could be the issue that breaks the camel's back."

The Labour Party recently came out in favour of restoring the cathedral, saying it has become clearer that structural reasons for rejecting restoration do not stack up, and while this option might be more expensive, widespread support for the building will ensure the funds are found.

The government is sticking with a hands-off approach to the cathedral and Earthquake Minister Gerry Brownlee says the decision about its fate lies squarely with the church as owner. "I suppose ultimately there are acquisition powers that could be exercised, but I think we would be very, very reluctant to get into that sort of space."

The nasty letters, emotive comments and "quite intransigent positions taken" don't reflect well on anyone involved, says Brownlee, but he thinks Jim Anderton has done a good job of attempting to resolve the dispute.

Because of the cathedral's iconic status, CERA has backed off enforcing its make-safe order to give all parties a chance to pursue discussions but Brownlee is not expecting a speedy decision. That's a worry because lengthy delays could start to hold up development around Cathedral Square. Potential investors in a new convention centre, for example, may be put off by the prospect of a dilapidated church on their doorstep.

"The whole issue of the cathedral is one that bothers everybody because it just sits there with no progress being made on it and people arguing around it. None of that is good for the city in my view," says Brownlee.

At best, the minister says, a broad consensus is all we can hope for. "No one is ever going to agree totally on what's proposed here, it's all going to be very difficult."

On the south side of ChristChurch Cathedral – in the lea of shipping containers weighted with water-filled export wine bladders as ballast to protect passersby from any further collapse – a columbarium holds the ashes of past parishioners who've chosen to be buried there. The epitaph reads: "Let these stones speak of a love that lasts for ever."

All sides of this fraught debate undoubtedly hope these words prove to be true when it comes to raising the huge sums needed to restore or rebuild what Philip Burdon likes to call "the most public private building in the country".



# Legal Shenanigans

What chance the different factions can “hot-tub” their way to a solution for the cathedral?

The Great Christchurch Buildings Trust (GCBT) went to the High Court seeking a judicial review of the decision to deconstruct the cathedral. It argued that under the terms of the Anglican (Diocese of Christchurch) Church Property Trust Act 2003, the trustees were obliged to “maintain and repair” the cathedral, and could not use the insurance money on other projects.

In an interim decision, Justice Lester Chisholm ruled that while there must be a cathedral on the site, it did not necessarily have to replicate the cathedral as it stood before the earthquakes. That left the way open for the building to be replaced and a GCBT appeal against this point has yet to be heard (scheduled for April 18). The judge also called for a stay on deconstruction of the cathedral while Church Property Trustees considered new information about engineering and cost issues, and CERA reviewed GCBT’s make-safe proposals.

Following tit-for-tat sniping in the media, the judge insisted the church, GCBT and CERA get around the table – “hot tubbing” as he put it – to reach a solution, but at the time of writing nothing had been settled.

If the GCBT bid fails, the Restore ChristChurch Cathedral Campaign could take High Court action based on a legal opinion from public law specialists Chen Palmer that it may be unlawful for the Historic Places Trust to authorise partial or total demolition of the cathedral. Under the Canterbury Earthquake (Historic Places Act) Order 2011, the HPT can grant permission to demolish or modify the cathedral but it must take account of heritage and cultural values.

In a third potential legal hurdle, Brent Rawstron and his canon-almoner brother Haydn are prepared to take action under the Resource Management Act in a repeat performance of a court case that stopped modernisation of the Canterbury Museum façade.

Meantime, the church is also waiting



Hailed by *The Sydney Morning Herald* as the ninth-best new attraction worldwide for 2013, the \$6 million, 700-seat cardboard cathedral (shown below under construction in March 2013) is made of 90 huge cardboard tubes with a polycarbonate roof. Designed by Japanese architect Shigeru Ban, it is similar to the Takatori Catholic Church he built in Kobe, Japan, following the 1995 quake. It has a 50-year lifespan.



GUY FREDERICK

to find out whether it was legally entitled to use \$4 million from the ChristChurch Cathedral insurance payment to build a Transitional Cathedral in Latimer Square.

Hailed by the *Sydney Morning Herald* as the ninth-best new attraction worldwide for 2013, the \$6 million, 700-seat cardboard cathedral is made of 90 huge cardboard tubes with a polycarbonate roof.

Designed by Japanese architect Shigeru Ban, it is similar to the Takatori Catholic Church he built in Kobe, Japan, following the 1995 quake. Originally conceived as a temporary structure built with volunteer labour, a good deal of concrete, steel and laminated timber has been incorporated into the Christchurch building to meet stringent earthquake codes, giving it a 50-year lifespan.

The Transitional Cathedral stands on land left vacant after St John’s Anglican Church was destroyed in the quakes, and after 10 years the spectacular A-frame building will be gifted to the St John’s parish. So why not use the St John’s \$4.4 million insurance payment for the cardboard building instead of dipping into insurance money needed to replace the original cathedral? The bishop told *North & South* the St John’s money was earmarked for the parish hall, vicarage and offices lost in the quake, “plus supporting the larger diocesan rebuild/new build”.

Justice Chisholm said that given the site-specific nature of the Cathedral trust, it was hard to see how any insurance proceeds could be spent elsewhere.

Having already entered into building contracts for the Transitional Cathedral, and worried about hefty legal liabilities if they tried to pull out, the Church Property Trustees applied to High Court for urgent clarification over the insurance spending.

Justice Graham Panckhurst reserved his decision after a hearing in late February at which the Attorney-General submitted there was no “cogent evidence” to back up the church’s decision to use the money in the way it had.

The CPT argued that with a 60 per cent decline in worshippers since it shifted cathedral services to temporary premises at Christ’s College, the Transitional Cathedral was essential to ensure there was a congregation to return to the Cathedral Square building, and by hosting civic events it would play a vital role in fundraising.

The church said if it was unable

to use the \$4 million of insurance money, “significant concerns about CPT’s solvency could arise” and redundancies could occur; any ruling also had significant implications for the spending of insurance payments for all CPT-owned land and buildings in the diocese’s 70 parishes.

Despite generous discounts by suppliers, fundraising for the Transitional Cathedral has been tough and diocesan marketing and development manager Craig Dixon says they were disappointed when the Canterbury Community Trust declined an application for \$300,000. “People are cagey about funding this building knowing there’s been a bit of division.”

## HISTORY REPEATS ITSELF

Controversy about ChristChurch Cathedral is nothing new. A story which appeared in *The Press* newspaper on June 28, 1872, celebrated the passing of the Cathedral Square Ordinance so the road in front of the cathedral site could be straightened, finally bringing to an end differences “which threatened to be interminable” between the Cathedral Commission (responsible for building of the cathedral) and the City Council.

The impracticality of funding the building of the cathedral through donations was also canvassed after the Diocesan Synod decided the Church Property Trustees would give £1500 to the project, provided £3000 was raised by public subscription.

The mover of the synod resolution said this would provide enough money to build walls 10 feet high and claimed the prospect of being lumbered with a half-finished building in such a prominent location would inspire sufficient donations for its completion.

This appalled *The Press*: “The idea of screwing a cathedral out of the citizens of Christchurch by the threat of occupying the centre of the city with a permanently unfinished building is ingenious; but we trust it will not be acted upon.”

Fearing the erection of a “paltry starved structure” in a square that “will be as grievous an eyesore as ever”, *The Press* was all for selling the cathedral land – a site “admirably suited” for government offices – and using the proceeds to build a cathedral elsewhere.

## OUR SUBSCRIBERS

Roger Cowell, Yorkshire, England

**Tell us about yourself.**  
An uncle described me as a “systems man”. I devise systems to communicate ideas. A knowledge broker, I bring people and ideas together. I love reading: fiction, poetry, newspapers, magazines, tickets, anything. I was a school-leaver volunteer in Tonga, then anthropologist, Pacific historian, nurse and writer. In 1975 I came to England for a summer, and stayed. Eventually, all learning and life experiences make us who we are, I believe.

**Do you identify with the North or South Island and why?**  
The North Island, without doubt. I was born in Auckland, and learnt my travelling ways early: I was a baby when we moved to Ngatapa, near Gisborne. I spent my childhood in North Island towns – Kaiaua, Cambridge, Putaruru, Rotorua – filling my head with memories of libraries, milk bars, A&P shows, amateur opera and theatre. I’ve lived in the South Island, but my heart is warmed by the North.

**What makes your region special?**  
Yorkshire is the latest place I’ve lived: most importantly, here I met my partner of 12 years, and we live surrounded by birdsong, on the edge of Ilkley Moor. I could do without the cold, dark winters, but seeing the spring growth, eating outside on (admittedly rare) warm summer nights, and walking by the Leeds to Liverpool Canal can barely be bettered anywhere.

**If you lived in New Zealand, where would that be, and why?**  
Three alternatives: Rotorua is a special place for me, from my adolescence in the 1960s, giving me a literary, political and musical education; we bought a house in Whangarei from a cousin and I could imagine retiring there; finally, a house right by Cheltenham Beach in Devonport would be ideal, if we win Lotto.

**Do you recall a *North & South* article or cover that challenged your thinking?**  
I’ve enjoyed and been challenged by many “big stories”, on being Maori, being Pakeha, state of the nation features over the years, but love the small items, too. Once on a flight from London I saw a child’s photo on a January cover, with a “Where is she now?” request inside, and realised “she” was someone with whom I corresponded regularly by email to buy Pacific book titles.

**As part of our subscriber family, you’re very important to us. Why is *North & South* important to you?**  
From its founding, *North & South* has been a much anticipated delight for me, both during short visits and longer stays in New Zealand and in successive English homes, as a window onto some of the passions, pleasures and disappointments of New Zealanders at home and abroad. It would be my wished-for luxury on a desert island, the last magazine I would give up buying if my budget required it.