

THE RED LION TAVERN, RANGIORA, NORTH CANTERBURY

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This history was researched and written by Matt Hennessey as part of a larger archaeological report that recorded the Red Lion Tavern, Rangiora, during its demolition following the Canterbury Earthquakes. Detailed histories such as this help inform the archaeological recording of the building and provide a much-needed foundation for interpreting the things we find during the building recording and subsequent earthworks.

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HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Methods

This historical narrative was prepared by Matthew Hennessey (Underground Overground Archaeology), following desk top research only. The contemporary location, description and physical characteristics of the property were identified using Google Maps and Canterbury Maps. Historical research undertaken, included consultation of land ownership information contained within the Canterbury Land District deeds indices and historic certificates of title, cadastral plans and maps accessed online through Archives New Zealand, Land Online and the National Library of New Zealand.

Published secondary sources, D. N. Hawkins' *Beyond the Waimakariri: A Regional History* (Hawkins 2001) and *Rangiora: The Passing Years and People in a Canterbury Country Town* (Hawkins 1983) were consulted for their accounts of Rangiora's early development and the history of occupation at Red Lion Hotel site. These accounts were corroborated through searches of contemporary newspapers accessed on the text-searchable database, Papers Past, and through verification of land ownership and occupancy. Papers Past was also searched for further information on the historical occupants and references to 19th and early 20th century activity on this site. Aerial imagery of the property from the mid-twentieth century to 2014 was examined on the Canterbury Maps GIS. Photographs of the property were searched online through the Alexander Turnbull Library and DigitalNZ. The archives of the Rangiora and Districts Early Records Society (housed at the Rangiora Museum) were consulted for photographs, documents and newspapers (including *The North Canterbury Gazette*) that have not been digitised and are not available online. Special thanks goes to Pam Mackintosh, archivist, Rangiora Museum.

Refer to references below for a list of sources.

Historical Background

The Red Lion Hotel is the third hotel to occupy this property, and replaced the timber Lion Hotel which burnt down in 1871, which had itself replaced an earlier corrugated iron structure, also called the Lion Hotel, in 1858 (Hawkins 1993: 87, Hawkins 2001: 41, *Star* 19/6/1871: 2). The current Red Lion Hotel was built on the site of the previous Lion Hotel (*Press* 9/4/1873: 2). At the time of its demolition the Red Lion Hotel was the oldest extant public house in Rangiora.

Land History

The land area affected by this archaeological authority was formed from Rural Section (RS) 385, a 50 acre section that was bordered by High Street (previously Harewood - Kaiapoi Road, and Oxford – Woodend Road) in the north, Victoria Street to the west, Northbrook Road to the south, and the railway to the east (Figure 1). RS 385 was issued by Crown grant to Charles Torlesse in 1855 (LINZ c.1853). Torlesse subdivided RS 385 throughout the 1850s, and formed a private road through the rural section from High Street to the Northbrook stream to give access to the small-holders occupying the section. This private road would later become Ivory Street, named after the nursery garden owned by William Ivory that occupied the south part of the rural section (Hawkins 1993, 82). In 1856 George Hanmer purchased two adjoining lots at the corner of High and Ivory Streets (LINZ c.1860, Figure 2). Hanmer appears to have constructed the corrugated iron Lion Hotel in 1857 (discussed in detail below). Hanmer's property, along with the Lion Hotel, was sold to Thomas W. Foster, a ships captain, in 1858 (LINZ c.1864, *Lyttelton Times* 3/7/1858: 4). Foster sold the property to Duncan, a solicitor, in 1864 (LINZ c.1860).

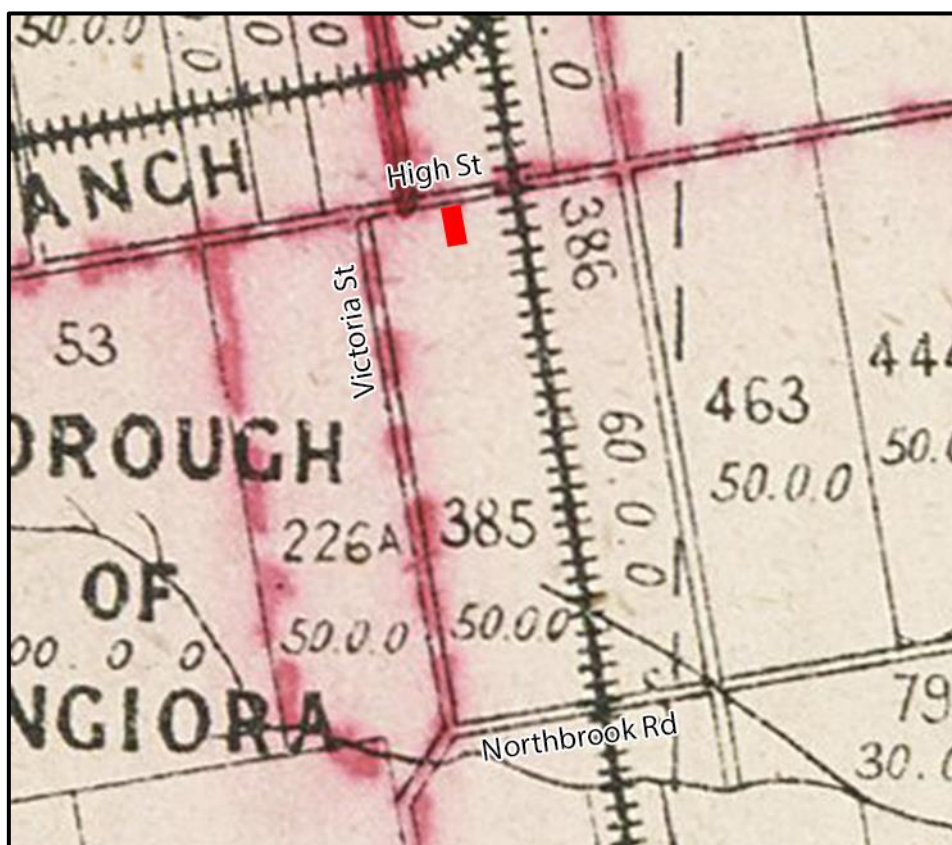


Figure 1. Crop of the 1881 Rangiora survey district map, showing RS 385. The section occupied by the Red Lion Hotel is marked in red. Image: Kemp 1881.

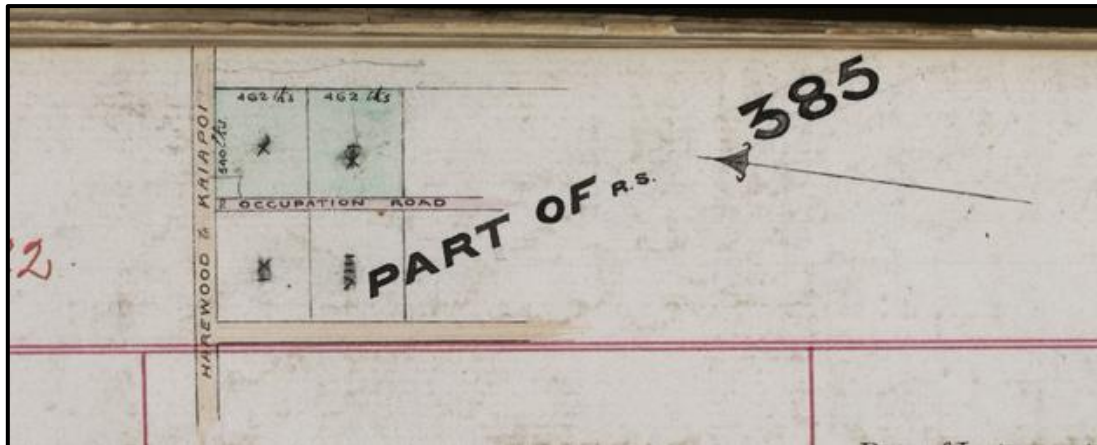


Figure 2. Plan of the sections purchased by Hanmer (marked Green) that appears in the Canterbury Land District Deeds Index (C/S 5). The occupation road is Ivory Street. Image: LINZ c.1860.

In 1871 Duncan sells the property to James Bassingthwaite (LINZ c.1860). Bassingthwaite constructed the current Red Lion Hotel in 1873 on the same site as the previous timber Lion Hotel, which had burnt down two years prior (*Press* 9/4/1873: 2, *Star* 19/6/1871: 2).

Bassingthwaite appears to have subdivided the property soon after his purchase in 1871, and sold the subdivided sections throughout the 1870s. The subdivision was recorded on an undated plan housed at the Rangiora Museum, titled “Plan of the Lion Hotel property cut up into building allotments” (Rangiora and Districts Early Records Society: 5100.2.03, Figure 3). The plan depicts the subdivided property boundaries, and also the out buildings belonging to the Lion Hotel. That the plan does not depict the Lion Hotel itself indicates that it was drawn after the timber Lion Hotel burnt down in June 1871 and before the construction of the current Red Lion Hotel in 1873, dating the plan to c.1872. In this plan the hotel property is an irregularly shaped section measuring 3 roods 26 perches (3692.67 m²). This section occupies parts of what are now 37 High Street, 39-49 High Street, 84 and 86 Ivory Street and 5B Cone Street.

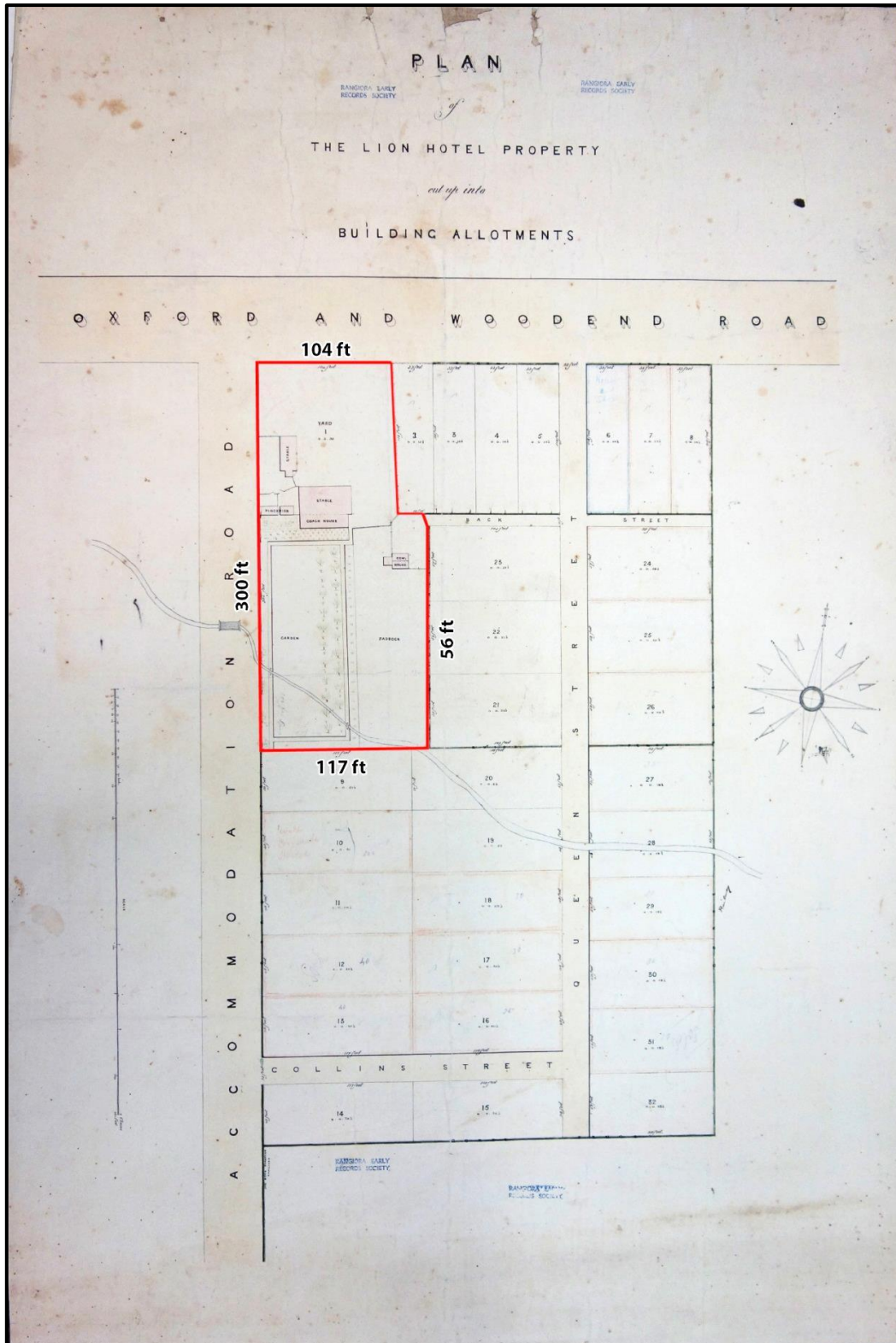


Figure 3. Plan of the subdivision of the property by Bassingthwaite c.1872. The section of the Red Lion Hotel is outlined in red. Image: Rangiora and Districts Early Records Society: 5100.2.03.

In 1877 Bassingthwaite subdivides the Red Lion section again. This subdivision made the section rectangular, reducing its size to 300 x 99 feet (2759.22 m²), and removing a large piece of land from the southeast of the property (LINZ c.1860b). The removed land appears to have been set aside as a

road reserve for the extension of Back Street (LINZ c.1878).¹ Back Street was never extended, and the street has since been removed. The piece of land that had been subdivided from the Lion Hotel section now forms part of 5B Cone Street. Bassingthwaite retained ownership of the newly subdivided section containing the Lion Hotel (LINZ c.1860, Figure 4).

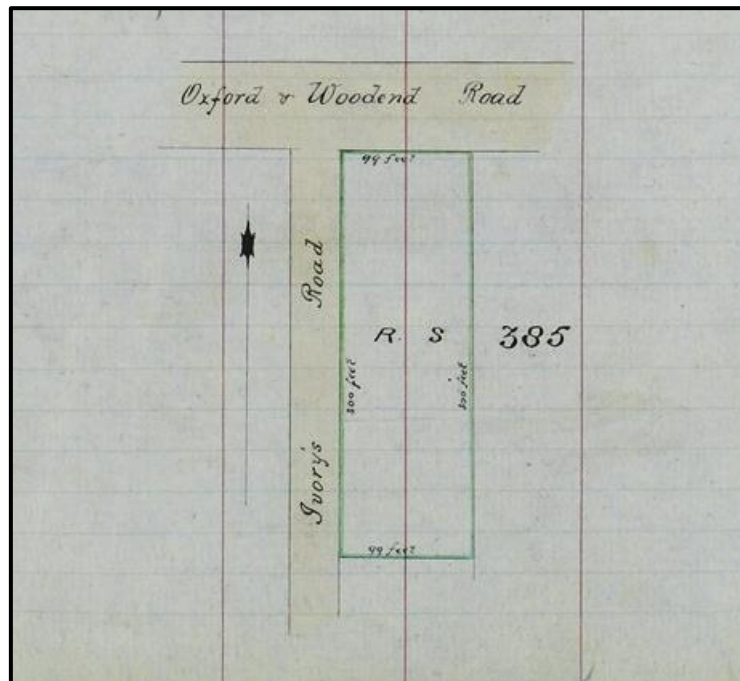


Figure 4. Plan of the section subdivided by Bassingthwaite in 1877 that appears in the Canterbury Land District Deeds Index (C/S 7). Image: LINZ c.1860b.

Then, in 1878, Bassingthwaite further subdivides the Red Lion section into two lots, a 100 x 99 foot (919.74 m²) section to the south on which Bassingthwaite built a house, and a 200 x 99 foot (1839.48 m²) section to the north containing the Lion Hotel (Hawkins 1993: 187, LINZ c.1860b). This is the current property of 39-49 High Street that exists today. The Red Lion section was sold to Henry Burns Moody in 1878 (c.1860b). After this the property passed through several owners and lease holders into the 20th century. A list of the owners of the property, the licensee's of the hotel and, where available, the barman employed by the hotel can be found in Table 1.

Table 1. List of property owners of 39-49 High Street and the licensees of the Lion and Red Lion Hotels until 1927.

OWNER	LICENSEE	BARMAN (if known)	REFERENCES
Charles Torlesse 1855-1856			LINZ c.1853
George Hanmer 1856-1858			LINZ c.1853
LION HOTEL CONSTRUCTED IN CORRUGATED IRON IN 1857 BY HANMER			See below
	Thomas W. Foster 1857-1862		<i>The North Canterbury Gazette</i> 1959, 3

¹ Back Street is shown on the c.1872 plan held by the Rangiora Museum and on DRP 2722, and originally ran along the south boundaries of 35 and 37 High Street and 29 Cone Street (LINZ c.1878, Rangiora and Districts Early Records Society: 5100.2.03). The c.1872 plan shows Back Street ending with a dashed line, suggesting that it wasn't finished.

Thomas W. Foster (died) 1858-1862			Hawkins 1993: 136, LINZ c.1860, <i>Lyttelton Times</i> 18/5/1861: 5
LION HOTEL RECONSTRUCTED IN TIMBER IN 1858 BY FOSTER			See below
Westenra and others (mortgagee of above) 1862-1864			LINZ c.1860
*Robert Newton (lease holder) 1862-1863	Robert Newton 1862-1863		LINZ c.1860, <i>Press</i> 22/4/1862: 6, <i>Press</i> 234/1863: 3
*Thomas Wycherley (lease holder) 1863-1864	Thomas Wycherley?		LINZ c.1860
Duncan 1864-1871	Thomas Wycherley ?-1868 (start date not known, but was the licensee by 1866)		LINZ c.1860, <i>Press</i> 5/12/1866: 2
	Thompkins 1868-1869		<i>Press</i> 23/12/1868, <i>Lyttelton Times</i> 8/1/1869: 2
	James Bassingthwaite 1869-1876		<i>Press</i> 6/5/1869: 2
			LINZ c.1860
LION HOTEL BURNS DOWN ON 19 JUNE 1871			
James Bassingthwaite 1871-1878			
RED LION HOTEL CONSTRUCTED BY BASSINGTHWAITE IN 1873			
	W. Mitchinson 1876-1878		<i>Press</i> 29/3/1876: 3
Henry Burns Moody 1878-1888	Henry Burns Moody 1878-1880	W. Roberts 1883-c.1888	LINZ c.1860b, <i>Press</i> 16/9/1878: 2, <i>Press</i> 4/6/1879: 3, <i>Press</i> 30/5/1883: 3, <i>Star</i> 27/4/1888: 3
	John Mullin (died) 1880-1886		<i>Press</i> 1/12/1880: 2, <i>Star</i> 30/3/1886: 3
	Emily Mullin (wife of above) 1886-1890		<i>Press</i> 8/6/1886: 3, <i>Star</i> 7/6/1886: 3
Hewlings 1888-1896	James Murry (married Emily) 1890-1895		LINZ c.1860b, <i>Star</i> 2/12/1890: 3
	H. C. Bailey (dies) 1895-1901		<i>Star</i> 16/3/1895: 5, <i>Star</i> 4/9/1901: 3
Frank Egan 1897-1927	Charlotte Sarah Bailey (wife of above) 1902-1904	John Anderson c.1901-1904	LINZ 1860b, <i>Press</i> 3/6/1902: 4, <i>Star</i> 17/6/1902: 3
	James J Maher 1904-1910		<i>Star</i> 6/6/1904: 3
*Collyns (lease holder)			LINZ 1860b

1907-1909			
*C. W. Burland (lease holder) 1909-1912	C.W. Burland 1910-1913		LINZ 1860b, <i>Star</i> 8/3/1910: 2
*Cornelius Byrne (lease holder) 1912-1915	Cornelius Byrne 1912-1915		LINZ 1860b, <i>Press</i> 18/3/1913: 6, <i>Star</i> 3/6/1913: 2
*George Cudby (lease holder) 1915- not known	George Cudby 1915-1920		LINZ 1860b, <i>Star</i> 7/6/1915: 6, <i>Sun</i> 6/12/1920: 8

1857 Lion Hotel

The site of the Red Lion Hotel appears to have originally been occupied by a corrugated iron building that was licenced to Thomas W. Foster, a ships captain, in 1857, and operated as the Lion Hotel (Hawkins 1993: 87, Hawkins 2001: 41, *The North Canterbury Gazette* 1959, 3). The earliest mention of the Lion Hotel on Paper Past is in July 1858 when the "Lion Hotel at Rangiora" is named as being sold at Mr Wylde's land and house property sale at Kaiapoi for £600 (*Lyttelton Times* 3/7/1858: 3). This sale would have been from Hanmer to Foster, and presumably the sale price included the two land parcels belonging to Hanmer which Foster took ownership of in August 1858 (LINZ c.1860). The newspaper article does not describe the building. The 1857 corrugated iron Lion Hotel was the second public building built in Rangiora, the first being an assembly room on Victoria Street at the Northbrook corner, built in 1856 (Hawkins 1993: 87).

Hawkins speculates that the corrugated iron Lion Hotel was built by Foster, however as Foster purchased the building in 1858 this is unlikely. Instead, this early Lion Hotel was probably built by Hamner, who took a mortgage on the property in June 1857. This was the first mortgage taken out on the property.

1858 Lion Hotel

By the 1860s the original 1857 corrugated iron Lion Hotel had been replaced by a timber structure (Hawkins 1993: 87, Hawkins 2001: 300). This second Lion Hotel was described by *The North Canterbury Gazette* 1959 as being "a modern two-story weatherboard building with dormers in the roof in the English style (*The North Canterbury Gazette* 1959, 3, Figure 5). This timber Lion Hotel was probably built in 1858 by Foster, who had taken a mortgage on the property in November of that year (LINZ c.1860). Foster died in 1861 and the property went into the ownership of the mortgagee, Westerna and others, who advertised the Lion Hotel for sale in 1864 for £710 (*Press* 13/1/1864: 2).

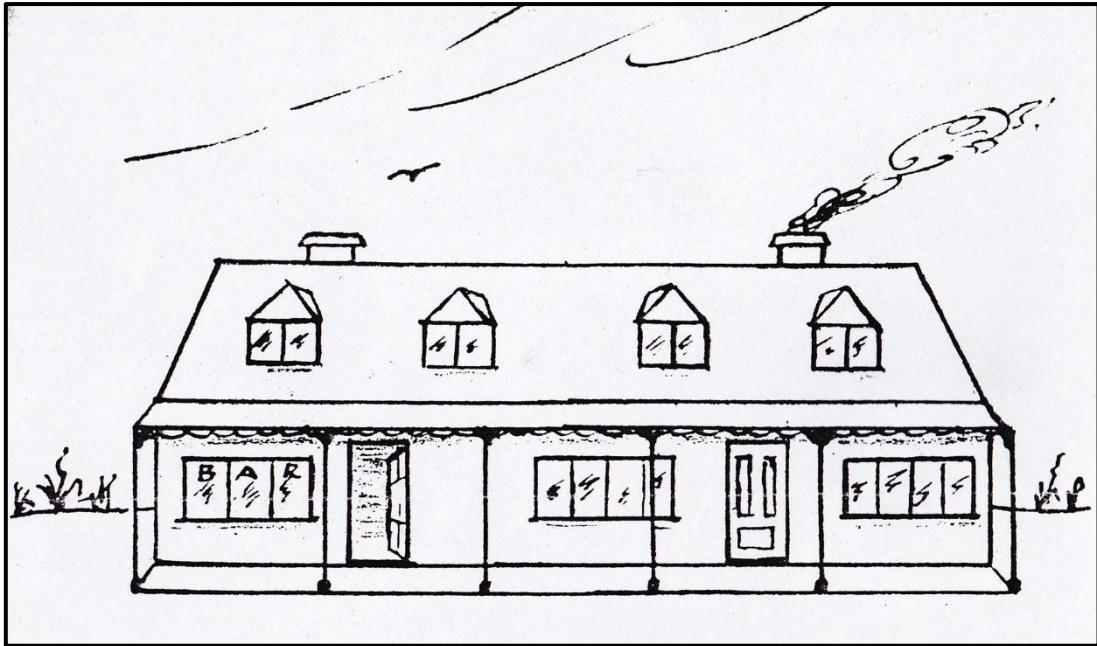


Figure 5. Drawing of the 1858 Lion Hotel. Author unknown. Image: *The North Canterbury Gazette* 1959, 3.

Few records of this 1858 Lion Hotel exist. Robert Newton, at his licence renewal hearing, described the Lion Hotel as having six bedrooms, two private sitting-rooms, two public rooms and “other conveniences” (*Lyttelton Times* 25/4/1863: 4). Duncan, who had taken ownership of the Lion Hotel in 1864, attempted to sell the hotel in 1868, where it was described as having five acres of land laid out as garden and paddocks, good stabling and other out-offices (*Lyttelton Times* 7/12/1868: 1). At the time the property was subdivided by Bassingthwaite in c.1872 the Lion Hotel had a paddock containing a cow house, garden, two piggeries and two stables, the larger of which had an adjoined coach house. The cow house was still standing in 1959 (*The North Canterbury Gazette* 1959: 3).

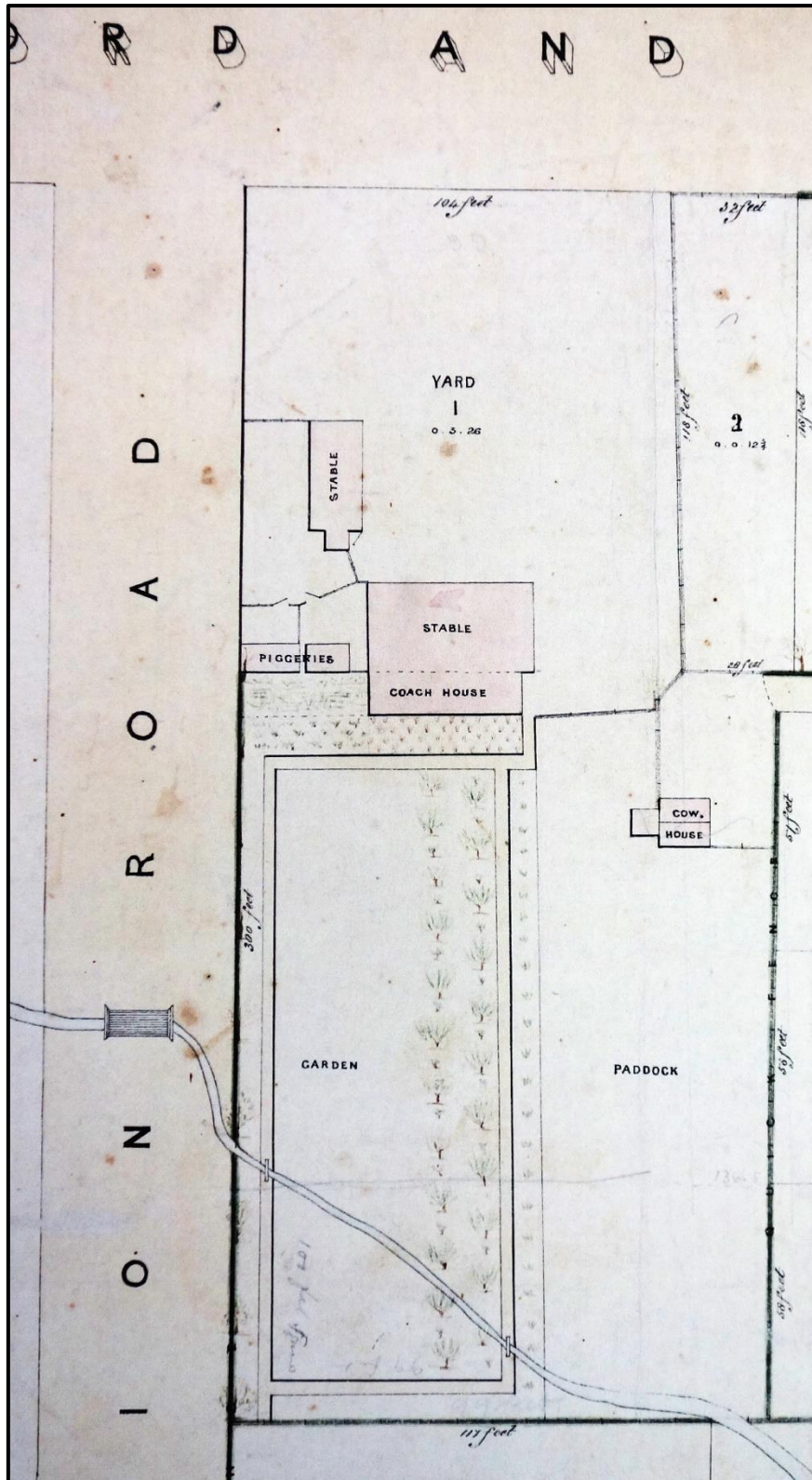


Figure 6. Crop of the c.1872 plan showing the Lion Hotel property subdivided by Bassingthwaite. Image: Rangiora and Districts Early Records Society: 5100.2.03.

The stables were used as a livery stable for much of the 19th century. The lease to the livery stable business was taken up by Hugh Vallance between 1873-1874 (*Lyttelton Times* 30/8/1873: 1, *Lyttelton Times* 7/7/1874: 4). Vallance occupied a property immediately south of the hotel (LINZ c.1878).

Like many small-town pubs, the 1858 Lion Hotel was a focal point of the community. Notable events included:

- Livestock sales were held on the Lion Hotel grounds from as early as 1858 (Hawkins 2001: 227, *Lyttelton Times* 11/12/1858: 4). Stock sales and shows appear to have continued at the Lion Hotel on a semi-regular bases until Bassingthwaite began subdividing the property in the 1870s.
- Land auctions were held at the Lion Hotel as early as 1861 (Hawkins 2001: 227, *Lyttelton Times* 20/6/1861: 4).
- The hotel appears to have been the primary location for auctioneers Buss and Hepworth, who advertised almost monthly auctions at the hotel between 1863-1869. Items for sale included land, livestock, ironmongery, art, groceries, clothing, drapery, hardware, brushware and fancy goods (*Lyttelton Times*: 3/5/1864: 4, *Press* 246/1865: 1).
- The annual meeting of the Rangiora Cricket Club was held at the Lion Hotel between 1863-1866, with the cricket ground being located in adjacent rural section 386 (*Lyttelton Times* 31/10/1866: 3). The Rangiora Cricket club failed in 1866, and the cricket ground was sold by auction at the Lion Hotel in July of that year (*Lyttelton Times* 31/10/1866: 3).
- The Lion Hotel hosted the annual meeting of the North Canterbury Jockey Club throughout the 19th century and into the 20th.
- The Lion hotel, and later the 1873 Red Lion, was used as a morgue and courtroom throughout the 19th century, with the first inquests being held there as early as 1858 (*Lyttelton Times*: 10/11/1858).
- In 1866 the hotel hosted the swearing in ceremony of Rangiora Company no. 4, a volunteer military company (*Press* 7/7/1866: 2).
- The council used the Lion Hotel for general meetings, including the organising of the Northern Agricultural Association show in 1866 (*Lyttelton Times* 15/12/1866).

The building is first referred to as the *Red Lion Hotel* by the *Press* in May 1869 (*Press* 6/5/1869: 2). Presumably the name had been changed by then Licensee James Bassingthwaite.

The 1858 Lion Hotel burned down at about 4:30 am 18 June 1871 (*Star* 19/6/1871: 2). The building, along with its contents, was almost completely destroyed. The only articles being saved were the top of a bagatelle table, a cash box, the hotels books and "a few trivial articles" (*Press* 20/6/1871: 2). At the time of the fire the owner of the hotel was Duncan. James Bassingthwaite was the licensee, and he and his family were home at the hotel when the fire began. An inquest failed to determine what had caused the fire (*Press* 30/7/1871: 2). The hotel had been insured for £600 and the stock and furniture was insured for £800, although Bassingthwaite estimated the lost stock and furniture to be worth around £1200-£1400 (*Press* 30/7/1871: 2). The stables and other outbuildings survived the fire as the wind was blowing in the opposite direction.

1873 Red Lion Hotel

After the fire Duncan sold the property to Bassingthwaite, who commissioned the construction of the current Red Lion Hotel in 1873.

James Bassingthwaite was something of an eccentric who by the end of the 1870s had become a notorious character in Rangiora. In 1877 Bassingthwaite entered into a series of arguments and lawsuits with the Road Board over a gully that ran through the Lion Hotel property (see Figure 6). This gully ran along High Street from West Belt to East Belt and had the tendency to flood the properties along High Street during heavy rains. The Road Board had entered the Red Lion Hotel property to straighten the gully to improve drainage without the permission of Bassingthwaite, who, in protest,

filled the gully in with rubbish and manure. The Road Board reopened the gully, only to have Bassingthwaite fill it again (Hawkins 1993, 231). That same year Bassingthwaite was accused by neighbour W. Gardiner of shooting a game cock. Bassingthwaite responded by laying a complaint against Gardiner that he had allowed his children to follow Bassingthwaite down the road calling “who killed the cock” and “cock a doodle doo” (*Press* 14/3/1877: 4). The argument escalated, and Gardiner threatened to “blow [Bassingthwaite’s] brains out”, a statement that earned Gardiner a fine of 10 shillings and costs, and a recognisance of £25 to keep the peace for 12 months (*Press* 14/3/1877: 4). In 1878 Bassingthwaite sued local blacksmith, William Noble, because soot from his chimney had spoiled his vegetables and his washing. He was awarded one shilling in damages (Hawkins 1993: 187).

Bassingthwaite’s comeuppance came in 1878 when he attempted to avoid paying his debts by declaring bankruptcy and offering his creditors 5 shillings in the pound (Hawkins 1993, 232). Suspecting foul play, his creditors employed investigators to search his house. They found £400 hidden in a box, and a further £400 was discovered in the quilting of Mrs Bassingthwaite’s petticoat. In total £812 was found on the premises (*Press* 15/1/1879: 2). Bassingthwaite also appears to have transferred a house into the name of his stable groom, George Butler, who hanged himself in the stable following Bassingthwaite’s arrest (Hawkins 1993: 232, *Star* 20/1/1879: 3). Bassingthwaite was sentenced to 1-year hard labour at Lyttelton Goal, and died in prison (Hawkins 1993: 232, *Press* 10/4/1879: 2, *Star* 1/2/1879: 3).

The new Red Lion Hotel built by Bassingthwaite was described in the *Press* as being 62 feet by 20 feet 10 inches on the ground floor. The building was made of brick with 14 inch thick walls. The “front rooms” were described going east as “bar, par-parlor, and commercial room”. While the “back rooms” were a sitting-room, Kitchen and commercial sitting-room. The first floor included two landings and 11 bedrooms with 10 foot high ceilings. The building would have a brick cellar located under the bar measuring 16 x 14 feet, and 8 feet high. The roof was clad in corrugated zinc, and the exterior walls covered in the cement. The building would be finished with a decorative veranda (Figure 7). The bar would be accessible from a door on the northeast corner of the building, although the main entrance to the hotel was the west door on the elevation fronting High Street, adjacent to the commercial room (*Press* 9/4/1873: 2). The staircase to the first floor was located behind the front door, which in 1959 already had its distinctive well-worn step (*The North Canterbury Gazette* 8/12/1959: 3). Drainage around the hotel was poor, and the cellar had a tendency to flood in wet weather (*Star* 3/9/1912: 1). By 1884 an open cesspool was present at the rear of the hotel and was a nuisance for the neighbours (*Star* 22/3/1884: 2).



Figure 7. Red Lion Hotel during its operation by James Murry (1890-1895). "J Murry" is printed above the entrance on the northeast corner of the building. Looking southwest. Image: Rangiora and Districts Early Records Society: P17/050.



Figure 8. Red Lion Hotel dated by the Rangiora and Districts Early Records Society to 1913.² Looking Southeast. Image: Rangiora and Districts Early Records Society: P02.005B.

² The identification of the women on the balcony as being the daughters of licensee H. C. Bailey is an error.

The North Canterbury Gazette noted that the hotel's kitchen was originally the billiards room (*The North Canterbury Gazette* 1959: 3). At the time of the demolition of the hotel the kitchen was located in the semi-detached room in the southwest of the hotel.

The fire had begun against the main wall of the hotel and had probably been started by a lit match or cigarette thrown into a wooden spittoon filled with dry sawdust. It had likely been smouldering since before the hotel had closed for the night (*Star* 13/4/1898: 3). The fire had burnt a large hole in the floor, had destroyed the wood lining of that wall, and was just starting to burn through the roof when discovered (*Press* 14/4/1898, *Star* 13/4/1898: 3). At the time of the fire the property was insured for £2000 and the stock and furniture for £800. The damage was estimated at £75-£90 (*Press* 14/4/1898, *Star* 13/4/1898: 3).

In 1906 "improvements" were made to the balcony on the orders of the Licensing Committee, which had refused the renewal of the licence (*Star* 5/3/1906: 3). By 1959 the fret work of the veranda had been removed, and the elaborate balustrading had been replaced with fibre cement boards. The west part of the balcony had also been enclosed to provide extra accommodation (*The North Canterbury Gazette* 8/12/1959: 3). The balcony along the north elevation, including the enclosed portion, was removed by 1973, based on available aerial photography (Figure 11).



Figure 10. Red Lion Hotel in 1959. Looking Southeast. Image: *The North Canterbury Gazette* 8/12/1959: 3.



Figure 11. Red Lion in 1973. Image: Canterbury Maps n.d.

The parapet was removed in 2011 or 2012, following damage sustained to the building during the 2011 Canterbury earthquakes.

In 1959 the family of the licensee occupied the rooms to the west of the first floor as their private living space (*The North Canterbury Gazette* 1959: 3).

The Red Lion Hotel continued to be the focal point of the community throughout the 19th century. In 1873 the hotel hosted the 'hairless horse', which had already attracted a large number of visitors to the Pier Hotel in Kaiapoi, and the Rangiora brass band played from the balcony in 1888 (*Press* 22/7/1873: 2, *Star* 30/8/1888: 3). Smoke concerts began being held at the hotel in the 1880s (*Lyttelton Times* 2/6/1888: 2). The hotel continued as a meeting place for the Rangiora Rifle Company, the Druids (of which Bailey was a member) and the Oddfellows (of which James Murry was a member) (*Press* 10/10/1892: 3, *Star* 22/3/1888: 3). In 1879 the chief of police report to the licensing commissioners noted that the Red Lion Hotel was being patronised by all classes, and that drunken patrons were frequently allowed to loiter about the premises (*Globe* 4/6/1879: 3).

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