

ADAPTIVE RE-USE

06

Pitches STORE
by Michael Wyatt
Architect

• OPHIR •

More than a century of history is encapsulated within the walls of this restored building.

Words by Frederique Gulcher

Photography by Marina Mathews





01 Architect Michael Wyatt hand painted the original exterior signage on the building's restored façade.

There must be something quite special about a restoration project where the architect – in this case Michael Wyatt – carefully retraces the original 130-year-old façade signage. He did so in March 2011, at the culmination of the six-year project, which turned a largely derelict former town store in one of Central Otago's heritage precincts into a restaurant and boutique bed and breakfast.

Michael Wyatt Architect, the clients, a team of builders, historic restoration experts and engineers had rallied around the building to breathe new life into it, and this was the final touch.

"It had good bones," says Wyatt, "but it was pretty rickety structurally and really, those bones were leaning."

The history of those bones dates back to the gold rush and a certain Mr Pitches, who set up a general merchant store in Ophir, now very much the proverbial one horse town. As the rush subsided, so did the store's viability. Not only lack of patronage but blighted by fire, it closed its doors in the 1950s, recovering only just to serve as a bus station, petrol pump, leather tannery, woodwork business and storage facility, suffering many modifications as it went.

The various fixes, additions and subtractions – including a hole in the wall to fit a bus – had been unkind to the building, says Wyatt.

"Really, its life was chugging to a halt, until Colleen and David Hurd saw the potential in it."

With the clients' blessing, Wyatt consulted Dunedin-based restoration expert and engineer Lou Robinson, amongst other building experts. Also on this bill was Amalgamated Builders' Cromwell manager and a heritage stonemason from nearby St Bathans.

"Like me, these guys have a sense of empathy for old buildings, so we were approaching this from the same perspective. Lou also had the blessing of Historic Places Trust, which was a rescue."

This was important. Ophir is registered Category 1 by Heritage New Zealand, at the time known as New Zealand Historic Places Trust, and already laid claim to a couple of historic buildings. The protective mechanism for the store was administered by the local District Plan policies and heritage listings under the Resource Management Act of 1991.


Whatever the architect and owners were planning, it needed to look authentic.

Comparing historic photos of Pitches Store with the restored building shows a successful intervention. The building has essentially been disassembled and seamlessly glued back together.

The bus-sized hole was replaced by a door and window and a new corrugated roof, in keeping with the original, was fitted. The stone cladding was repointed, which in doing so, served to strengthen the structure. The second level timber floor also effectively braces the stone. The beams, walls and roof tie the building together. Much of the build is original and recycled, for example the team were able to reuse discarded bricks that had been left onsite after various extensions had fallen into disrepair.

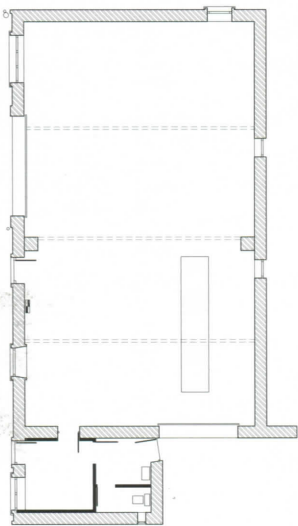
Where the necessities of modern day life intervened – such as the warm water central heating system – every care was taken to ensure such systems were seamlessly integrated into the building to minimise visual impact.

Strengthening the rickety building was crucial to meet a number of conditions, notwithstanding being earthquake proof. Furthermore, consent needed to be granted by the council to allow the premises to operate commercially in what had since become a residential zone.

Patience, experience and a large dose of veneration has brought this building back to life, and while six years may seem a lengthy project, many more years of life have been breathed into it. 



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|--------------|---------------------------|------------|
| 1 Foyer | 5 Breakfast room | 8 Laundry |
| 2 Restaurant | 6 Bedroom | 9 Store |
| 3 Bar | 7 Bathroom/
ensuite/WC | 10 Terrace |
| 4 Kitchen | | 11 Patio |



Floor plan before

Ground floor plan

First floor plan



- 02 Recycled matai flooring adds to the warm glow and complements the timbers used in the bar.
- 03 The history of the building is literally written on the walls of this guest bedroom.
- 04 An eclectic mix of traditional, contemporary and period-inspired pieces lends a modern-classic feel to the dining room.





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05 The existing structure was completely gutted and the original stone walls stripped back and repointed. The lean-to structure, which houses two of the six bedrooms, breakfast room, laundry and kitchen, is a new, albeit historically accurate, addition.

06 Photos of Pitches store prior to renovation.

Practice

Michael Wyatt Architect

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Practice profile

Michael Wyatt Architect Ltd is an award-winning design practice that pursues quality, style and value in its architecture. The practice believes its strength lies in the ability to respond to the needs of the client with a well-developed, innovative solution.

Project team

Michael Wyatt, Neil Slater,
Matthew Barton

Builder

Amalgamated Builders

Consultants

Engineer: Hadley Robinson Ltd

Quantity surveyor: Maltbys

Landscape designer:

Blakely Wallace

Products

External Walls: Original stone walls; weatherboards on timber framing

Roofing: Corrugated Colorsteel

Skylights: Adlux

Ceiling: Gib

Internal walls: Original stone walls; Gib on timber framing

Flooring: Matai

Windows and doors: Timber framed by Firman Joinery

Lighting: Lighthouse

Heating: Firebird boiler and DeLonghi radiators from Central Heating New Zealand

Fireplace: Jetmaster

Time schedule

Design and planning: 2 years

Construction: 6 months

Project areas

Site size: 1985m²

Building area: 370m²