

13. Wellingtonia Sequoiadendron giganteum

15 Cardigan St East, Middlemarch Township



Wellingtonia with a score of 159 further back from the road.



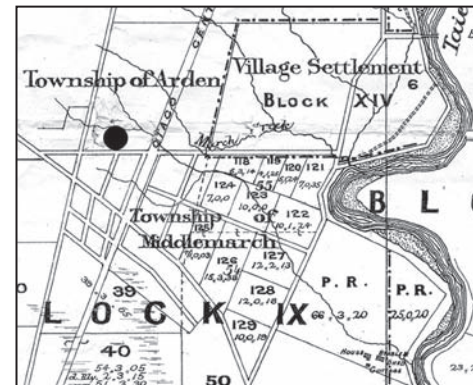
Girth: 6.9 m
Height: 30 m
STEM Score: 189

There are many fine specimens of this species around Middlemarch. This one is central and easy to find.

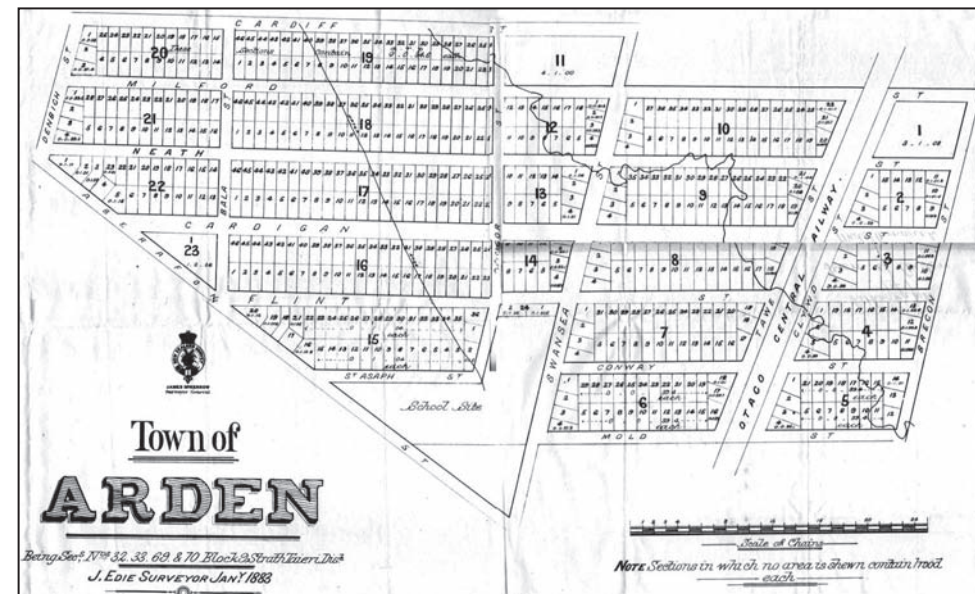
On this property is also a large Douglas fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*) with a STEM score of 185 seen to the left above and in the photo to the right as well as a second

The Township of Arden

Arden was the planned township for the district as shown on Surveyor Edie's survey maps of 1883. However, it was the private township of the Humphreys at Garthmyl which gave name to the township of Middlemarch that we know today and it was also in Middlemarch, not Arden, that a main street developed. This was Snow Avenue, where many services and shops were located, such as the railway station, the Railway Hotel, Mitchell's famous store "Mitch's", stock agents Stronach, Morris & Co, the post office, Strath Taieri Hotel, Pacey's fruit, confectionary, billiard, hair



The 1891 sale map for Garthmyl Estate with the Township of Arden, the Village Settlement and the Township of Middlemarch. The black dot indicates the location of Tree No 13.



dressing, tobacco and later TAB shop, Horn's grocery store, Buchanan's Garage.

In Arden the sections for sale stretched from Mold Street north across Conway, Cardigan, Neath, Milford and Cardiff Streets and west from Brecon Street across Clywd, Tawe, Swansea, Bangor, Bala and Denbich Streets. Only a smaller number of

sections were sold for housing and many of the intended street names were never used. However, recently blue street signs have been put up and some of the old names have reappeared, for example Bala Street. Younger people may be surprised to know that in earlier times roads were often known simply as "back road" or "top road" or by the name of the people who lived there. Hence we now have roads named



A view of the two sections in Arden that were bought by early families with the old trees now towering in isolation over the landscape.



This water colour of the Guilds' house inspired by the uninterrupted vista across the paddocks from Conway Street before the more recent houses in Cardigan Street were built.

after old families, for example McKinnon, McHardy, Kidd, Watson and Mason.

A telltale sign of an old place is the presence of trees. Two adjoining sections in Cardigan Street feature mature trees that do not exist on any of the neighbouring sections. This is where land was taken up when sections in the township of Arden were first offered for sale.

The Johnstons

Thompson (1949) reports in "East of the Rock and Pillar" that Thos. Johnston opened his general store and butchery business here in 1889. A check of the certificate of title (83/154) finds that Jane Melville Johnston "wife of Thomas Johnston, Middlemarch, Labourer" acquired the 1/2 acre property in 1887 "for her sole and separate use." The right of married women to their own property had only been guaranteed in 1884. Nevertheless, it was Jane's husband, whose name became associated with the property.

Thompson (1949) explains that "the Strath Taieri district had reason to be very grateful to Mrs. Johnston for the excellent work as midwife she did for many years" (1949, p. 116).

Stone's Otago and Southland Directory lists Thomas Johnston as labourer in 1892 but by 1893 his occupation has become that of butcher.

We do not know for sure when the house was built nor what use it was put to. It is possible that the Johnstons stayed on at Cardigan Street after it was sold. However, what we do know is that the title held was only for the front 1/2-acre section.

Bill Watson

According to the certificate of title the property was bought by William (Bill or Billie) Thomas Watson just a year later in 1888. As a bullock wagon driver, he had been brought over from Tasmania by Gellibrand in the early days of the settlement to drive and cart on Cottesbrook, of which Gellibrand had the lease. Some bullocky he must have been! The following story about his prowess is from Thompson (1949):

Watson was a well educated man, who was fond of quoting Shakespeare and who knew his bible from cover to cover. It may be surmised that these accomplishments conferred some advantage on him in the management of his bullock teams, for

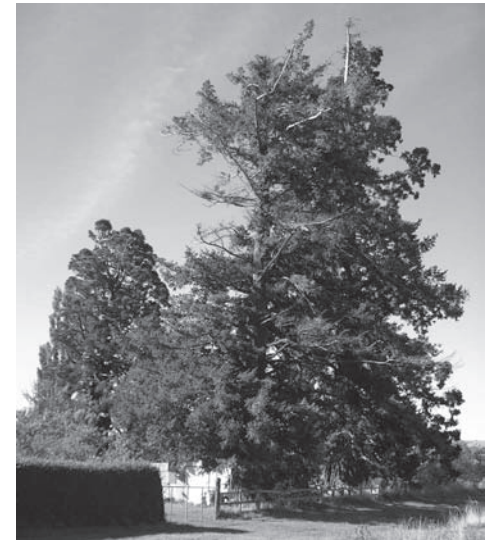
these patient animals although exhibiting many admirable qualities were given upon occasion to the most exasperating obduracy. (p. 86)

The bullock drivers had tremendous tenacity, courage and hardiness to manage the heavy wagons and their straining teams of bullocks. As late as 1883 there were no formed roads into the Strath Taieri, only tracks. In winter and when it rained they were particularly difficult to negotiate, often with deep ruts having developed. The early settlers depended on bullock wagons for supplies in and the transport of wool out.

An anecdote about a young town girl's first experience of Bill Watson's bullock team after her arrival in the district is told in Thompson (1949):

One evening, not long after her arrival, she was playing in the home paddock when she was startled by a weird noise that seemed like the creaking, screeching and groaning of some invisible monster. She looked about to locate the sounds, but although it seemed to be drawing nearer she could see nothing. Unable to endure it any longer she rushed into the house crying out, "Auntie! Auntie! There's a great monster up in the clouds making such a dreadful noise!" "...It is only Billie Watson with his bullock wagon."... Ten big bullocks, yoked in pairs, drawing the cumbersome wagon with its broad wheels - what a startling sight for a little town girl! (p. 86)

Bill Watson is also described as "a musician who was much in demand at all social functions" (Thompson, 1949, p. 45). At the Humphreys' mid-summer annual picnic at Garthmyl "a pleasing ceremony took place - the presentation by Mr. Humphreys of a very handsome German concertina to Mr. William Watson of Cottesbrook station, bearing the following inscription on a silver plate, 'Presented to W. Watson, Christmas



The three old trees that remain today, from left: A pine tree, a Douglas fir and the Wellingtonia.

1881, as a mark of esteem from his many friends'." (Thompson, 1949, p. 45)

In 1893, aged nearly 50, Bill Watson married Agnes Bateman, 29 years his junior. They had a son, William George, but tragically Agnes died in 1895, when the son was just one year old. Perhaps this event caused Bill to make a will in 1896, written in his own handwriting and witnessed by John Elliot JP, in which he leaves everything to his son.

From 1888-97 Bill Watson's occupation is listed as sheep farmer in Stone's Otago Southland Directory. His probate states that he leased Section 15 Block XIV Strath Taieri District, and perhaps this was his farmland.

In 1898 until his death his occupation changes to coal merchant. In 1903, he took out a mortgage with John Elliot, possibly to buy the 1/4-acre sections on each side of the property, because Sections 9, 10, 11, 12 Block IX Town of Arden are listed as freehold. Perhaps he needed more land

nearby to keep his two horses, 'Darky' and 'Punch,' likely to have been used to deliver the coal he sold.

In 1911, when William George was just 17, his father died. We know Bill must have been ill because Dr Irwin was paid from his estate, as was board to Mrs Barnett, perhaps for 'W. Watson Junior.' Mrs Barnett was also paid for 'attendance etc.' ○

The following year William George also died. Five months after Bill's death John Elliot took over the property, which sold for £207 10 0 with a mortgage of £65 0 11 owing to John Elliot. When he, in turn, died in 1916 the property was administered by the executors of his will. ○

The Swans

In 1924 Muriel Esther Swan of Dunedin, Spinster, bought the property. Her mother Mrs Swan lived with her. Dids Williams remembers that they ran a drapery store in the two front rooms of the house when he was a boy. He sometimes went there with his mother to look at clothing. Muriel had consumption and coughed. In 1929 they sold the property to Jack Schluter, whose widowed mother had married Andrew Guild Sen.

The Two Guild Families

Two Guild families occupied the house in Cardigan Street over a period of 44 years: First Andrew and Flora Guild, and later their son and daughter-in-law, Doug and Jessie Guild.

Andrew Guild came to New Zealand in 1891. He turned 21 the day he left for New Zealand. Born in Alva, Stirlingshire, Scotland, he never lost his broad Scottish accent and also could speak Scottish Gaelic (Gàidhlig). He was from a well-to-do

family with the sons educated at the nearby Dollar Academy in the town of Dollar, while the daughters had a governess at home for their education.

The Dollar Academy was founded in 1818 by provisions in the will of John McNabb, a local who had made his vast fortune in shipping. The interest on this fortune was then worth £60,000. He wanted "a charity or school for the poor of the parish of Dollar where I was born." An academy was established to educate the poor of the parish and take in pupils from wealthier



The Dollar Academy, Dollar, Scotland.

families as boarders. The poor would receive this as a right, along with clothing and medical care, but the wealthy would pay on a sliding scale (the maximum being 5/- per subject per term). The architect, William Playfair designed the main building with its Doric facade. Six houses were also built to accommodate the teachers and boarders. ○○

Andrew Guild became involve in scheelite mining at the Reefs and Macraes. Rhoda, the daughter, thinks he lost a lot of money



Stirlingshire, Scotland

from this involvement.

Andrew Guild went back home to Scotland twice to visit his mother. Neighbours of the Guild family in Scotland were the Drummonds. On his return to New Zealand, Andrew Guild visited the Drummond's son, John, a butcher in Oamaru, where he first met the daughter Flora, then still only young.

Flora Eveline Schluter (née Drummond) had been left a widow with two small boys, William John (Jack) and Frederik Henry (Fred) when in her early 20s. In 1913, she married Andrew James Guild, who was then 43, and they had four children: Andrew Drysdale, Ian Drummond, Douglas James (Doug) and Rhoda Isabel.

Mrs Guild had the first rubber-tired trap in the district, pulled by her black pony "Sammy." Quite a shrewd pony, he would try to pull into the hotel yard when taken out shopping, a sign that Mr Guild had visited there with a client, when he was an agent for Wrightson's.

When Andrew Guild was first in the district he had a property at Yellow Hill on the Eastern side of the Taieri River.

Andrew Guild is remembered as a great horseman. For some time he travelled with a stallion called Barney, providing services around the district. He was also a keen dog-trialler who strongly supported the move to form a Southern Championship Association. "A diligent worker in the club's interests" from 1907 until his death in 1942, he "travelled afield and brought back new ideas for the up-to-date running of the trials" (Thompson, 1949, p. 133).

A 1912 map drawn up by surveyor Couston for the purpose of land transfer suggests A J Guild owned Section 53 Block IX on Garthmyl Rd and part of Section 4 Block

A saying by the children about Mold Street, when Rhoda Guild was a child:
"The further down you go towards the cemetery, the moldier you get."

IX nearby, bordering the Taieri River. He may also have owned other land.

Mrs Guild's sons from her first marriage, Jack and Fred Schluter, started at Strath Taieri School in 1913. The family first lived in the stone cottage at Garthmyl, then next to Mr McDonald's blacksmith, and later the stone house opposite the Pipe Band's hall in Milford St.

The stepson, Jack Schluter, bought the house in Cardigan Street in 1929 and the family shifted there. "In those days the streets were not called by their name. There was no need for street names because everybody knew each other" (Rhoda Frewen, née Guild, personal communication).

The large trees provided excellent shelter for the many dogs they kept for mustering, and for milking the cow under, too.

Rhoda, the daughter, remembers that the family had a lot of fruit trees - pears, various varieties of plums and apples - as well as gooseberries, currants etc. Her father had a well tended garden and entered his produce in the local show along with other great gardeners, for example John Leitch of Browns Road. "Great competition in those days," Rhoda remembers.

Doug and Murray Newman went away to the war together and stayed friends for life. During the war Doug served in Italy. He was a tank driver and had a near mishap, when his tank got burnt. Fortunately, he was pulled out just in time. Murray was a Non-Commissioned Officer.



Final leave 1942. From left: Murray Newman, Jack Guy, Doug Guild, Mrs Guild, Rhoda Guild, Margie Guy and Mary Tisdall (née Elliott).

On his return from the war Doug worked for NZ Railways for 25 years and at one time for the Rabbit Board along with David Heggison. In 1950 he married Jessie. She had come down from Ranfurly to help Doug's mother, Mrs Guild, who had gone blind while Doug was away. Mrs Guild died some weeks before the wedding and Jessie and Doug carried on living in the

family home, which they eventually bought from Jack Schluter in 1969.



The medals Doug was awarded.

Doug and Jessie made numerous improvements to the house and the grounds, which were quite overgrown. Some of the trees planted

many years earlier shaded the house and had to be cut down. A row of pine trees on the western side were taken out by the roots with the help of much digging, sawing and pulling by the car, which Jessie was learning to drive! On the eastern side they cut down two or three Wellingtonia using a long timber saw. Jessie recollects the bark being thick and soft. They had to take spells from sawing. Doug chopped the wood into firewood, but Jessie remembers it

burning very poorly on the coal range. "The wood just went dead." They planted hedges at the front and sides and built a garage.

Jessie remembers feeling quite lonely because there was only one other house nearby, that of the Grahams. None of the houses we see today were built then. Only the doctor's residence was built during her time there. In addition, the main street, Snow Avenue, was sealed only as far as Mold St where it changed name to Tawe St. This was only a grass track up to Cardigan St with a footbridge over March Creek half way. To go by car to the main street one had to cross the railway line and turn right down Clywd St, which is now closed.

Doug was very fond of dogs and many people today remember his dog following him everywhere. They were usually Fox Terriers but one time Doug also had a Retriever, who would go with him on his bicycle. The dogs were not really allowed inside as far as Jessie was concerned and certainly not on the furniture. When Doug came home from work the dog would follow him in but had to wait for him to take off his jersey for it to lie on near the hearth, thus keeping the peace!

Occasionally March Creek would flood their garden right up to within 1/2 inch



The back yard in 1953. The sash windows were later replaced with modern windows that opened out.



Jessie Guild 2005.

In 1973 Doug and Jessie moved to Palmerston. Sadly Doug died on ANZAC Day the following year. Jessie now lives in Ranfurly.

The Back Section and Geordie Oates

Richard Forest Aitken of Outram, labourer, bought the back section of 1/2 acre in 1887. No information has come to light about this man. He bought the sections on two different titles (Section 29 on CT 83/153 and Section 30 on 83/166, both Block IX Town of Arden). In 1913 land records show acceptance of his claim to having lost the original title. Five days later he sold the sections to George Herbert Oates. Geordie Oates is listed as farmer in Stone's Otago & Southland Directory. People who remember describe him as "an old cockney." Born c. 1869, he never married.

Geordie Oates grew raspberries and vegetables. He also had an orchard with nine varieties of apples.

His nephew, Joe Urquart, his sister's son, came up for holidays and played tennis with the Guild children. It is thought Geordie Oates left his property to the nephew. The title does not support this, however he may well have been a beneficiary of his uncle's will.

Ann Reynolds, whose parents added the

of the water coming into the house. They wrote many letters to Downes Roberts of Gladbrook, who was then on the Taieri County Council, and eventually he managed to get the problem fixed.

property to their holiday home next door, remembers the old orchard there, which grew the loveliest apples she has ever tasted. Geordie Oates died in 1944 and the bachelors, Mac and Jim Kerr of Glen Bar Station, who also owned neighbouring land, bought the property.

The Tisdalls

From the late 1940s "Whiskers Bill" and Mavis Tisdall lived in Oates' house with their four children. Access to the property was a bit of a problem because the planned road Neath Street was never formed and March Creek can flow quite full and fast. As a consequence, the occupants would take the liberty of walking through the Guild's property at any time of the day or night. This could be a little disconcerting for any Guild family member taking a bath in the tin tub in the outside bathroom, not to mention visiting the long drop at the end of the garden.

The Reynolds

The Reynolds family from Dunedin bought the front property in 1974 from the Cooper family, who had had the property for a short time. The Reynolds enjoyed holidaying there for nearly 30 years and added the back section to the property after Jim Kerr's death in 1981.

Joan Reynolds has fond memories of Middlemarch. During the Depression the then Dunedin Mayor, R S Black, who served 1929-1933, arranged for children from families where the father was unemployed to go to the country for a time. Joan and her brother Bob came to Middlemarch, where they stayed with the couple, who ran the Strath Taieri Hotel. They had no children of their own. Joan and Bob went to school here. After 6 weeks

Joan got very homesick and went back home, while Bob stayed for 10 weeks. They would go home every Friday after school and return to Middlemarch Sunday night.

Joan remembers the rabbits vividly. There were so many it seemed as if the ground moved, so they would hide behind the rocks. A young barman, Jack, got into terrible trouble one time, when he gave Joan and Bob a glass of lemonade in the bar, an area strictly out of bounds for children. Each week they would get twopence each to spend on sweets. Once the train driver would allow them on the train's engine and stay there while it was shunting.

Joan's fond memories made the family decide to look for a family holiday home in Middlemarch. When they saw the Guild's house, they thought it very inviting and bought it.

Just as Jessie Guild thought the flooding problems with March Creek had been solved, it appears the flooding continued on both sections. It is perhaps surprising that so many trees have survived, as they must frequently have experienced "wet feet."

Paul Reynolds, the son, experimented with fruit trees to see what would grow in this climate. He bought three specimen of each kind of tree and planted as many varieties



The house 2005.



An aerial photo of the section today, showing not only the three large trees at the front, but the extensive planting of fruit trees in recent years.

as possible from pears to Japanese and European plums, almonds and hazel nuts. Only walnuts proved unsuccessful. Paul's sister Ann wonders if the delicious apples in Geordie Oates' orchard sparked Paul's keen interest in fruit and other trees.

After 30 years the Reynolds sold their Middlemarch property, but they still have fond memories of the years they spent there. The numerous fruit trees remain as a reminder of their care and passion for this

My sincerest thanks to those who have generously shared their memories and knowledge of these two properties, now united: Rhoda Frewen, Jessie Guild, Ann and Joan Reynolds, Sieny Teunissen, Jack Tisdall, and Flossie and Dids Williams.

place.