

THE KORU MONASTERY

As I remember it from my boyhood having stayed there for over a week during the winter holidays (school) in June 1898.

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As we lived at Koru from sometime in February 1894 until November 1897 and as my brother Charlie and I were very friendly with the Mace boys and quite frequently went to play with them at week ends I had already a fair knowledge of the old place before we left there at all but our stay there in June 1898, practically made both of us acquainted with every nook and corner of it except the bedroom of Mr and Mrs Mace themselves which so far as I know was never entered by either of us. The old monastery itself was a very long and narrow building, I should say probably at least 60 feet in length and less than 30 feet in width. It comprised of one very large living room I should think about 30ft in length and 18 ft in width with a very large openfire place in the centre of the eastern wall. This was of stone but I cannot remember whether the chimney was of stone also or of iron, my impression is that it was iron. On each side of the fireplace there were two small paned windows. These were not very large or wide probably about 4ft by 2½ft each of about a dozen panes of glass, a type of window very common in old houses and I think some can still be found in New Plymouth today.

The western wall contained three doors each leading into a small room, two of these were bedrooms and one was the parlour. This room according to what Mr Mace told me used to be Father Rolland's study. I have a vague idea that there was an open (small) fire place in the northern wall of the parlour but am inclined to think I may be wrong in that yet seem to remember a mantel piece on that wall. Possibly there was a shelf there which gives me that impression. The room was very cluttered, or at any rate gave that impression owing to it's smallness. Except that there was a centre table on which lay a family Bible the only other thing I can recall in the room was a glass jar, inside which was a small snake preserved in spirits. A Tasmanian whip Snake, Mr Mace said it was. How it came into the Mace's possession I don't think I ever heard. This room opened out on the front verandah and straight out from it was the small front gate from which one came to the house by a path about four or five feet wide which was bordered on both sides by the usual very popular box hedge. The building was only a short distance from the road and this area between road and house was planted with shrubs and flowers and some small trees. At the northern end of the living room were two bedrooms with a passage between which latter led to the vegetable garden at the north of the building. Both these rooms though narrow contained three beds, single, or rather two beds and a stretcher. Between these beds there was very little space and between the end of the beds and the stretcher which lay across the end of the room there was room to stand and the door just cleared the end of this stretcher. I suppose the stretchers were

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set up when required as extra beds. On the inner wall of the eastern of these two rooms, that is on the living room end hung Mr Mace's curved cavalry sword in it's scabbard. I wonder what finally became of it?

At the other end of the living room also entered there by a door in the centre of that end wall, as was that leading to the vegetable garden, was the kitchen, on the western side. I cannot remember whether the cooking was done on a range or on the old type colonial oven, my impression is though that it was a range, in fact I am almost certain it was. Also I am not certain whether the kitchen took up all the space on that side or whether there was not a small pantry and/or a wash house right at the end. I think there was. At that end also there was another bedroom leading out of the living room and to the right of the centre door from the living room past the kitchen was a narrow space perhaps four feet wide with a shelf the full width of it on which was stored harness saddles, etc., including garden tools and such, and under which dry fire wood was kept. The bedrooms just mentioned I think jutted out as the end of the verandah. There was also a verandah over the south end door which was really the back door and also over the north end. So far as I can remember the roof was of iron but may have been shingles. The building was of timber pit sawn on the place or at any rate near by, Mr Mace said, and was on wooden piles. The wall boards were over lapping, not straight up and down with battens at the joins as in many early houses. I don't think the building had ever been painted. Throughout the place the windows were the same as I have already described. In the living room the only furniture was the piano, chairs quite a number of them, and perhaps the longest table I have ever seen in my life. I never asked about it, probably didn't think of it at the time but have often wondered since whether it had belonged to the monastery and was there when the Mace's entered into possession. So far as I can remember the table was not a refectory table. I have never seen any table in a private house to compare with it in size except in an old house in an out of way corner of the Waikato where I once happened to go with a relative. It at once made me think of the table in the Koru Monastery by it's length. This, Waikato, table was a refectory table, had been brought out from England by the then owners grandparents and had been in the family for centuries. It was eleven feet long but very narrow, which I don't think Mace's was.

On the eastern side of the monastery and quite close is a very deep steep gully and from the house down and even further up this gully was an orchard of all sorts of fruit trees and also further along some grapes though the most of these were across the road just below the cemetery and on the eastern slope of the ridge on which the cemetery is situated. One pear tree of the old orchard is still growing in the gully above the monastery site. The vehicle entrance cowyards, dairy and a shed were at the south of the building and also the well which was over 80 feet deep and from the bottom of which

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Mr Mace said the stars were visible in broad daylight and the sky quite dark. I don't know how far the water was up in the well when I knew it but I do know it seemed to take quite a while for a pebble to reach it if dropped in from the edge and an unconscionable time to haul a drum full of water up by the old hand windlass. All the wells in Koru in that area were very deep including the school well. I remember Mr Schwamm who lived on the S.E. corner of the junction of the Koru and Plymouth saying his was nearly 100ft deep, well over 90ft.

The cemetery across the road and a little further up than the monastery was is some distance from the road at, or near the end of a steep ridge or spur rising from another deep gully on it's eastern side and falling on it's western side down to the Oakura River. The graves numbered six or more but I do not know the names except a Mrs Madgwick, I think two Carpenters and a Costello. There are also a lay brother or two from the monastery. I think Mr H.J. Green knows all or most of them and I think Mr H. Mullan got a list from him for the Historic Places Trust. When I knew the place it was already much overgrown with gorse and wild grape-vines and the crosses and paling fences were in a bad state of repair and falling to pieces and the cattle getting all over the place. I understand that the old Monastery was destroyed by fire in or about 1925 when Mr Wilfred Mace who was the second son of Mr Thos Mace was in occupation. I was always under the impression that all the family of Mr T. Mace were born at Koru but from a paper I have recently seen that is not so by any means. Thomas Mace was a younger brother of Captain F.J. Mace N.Z.C. and also took part in the Taranaki Wars. Mrs Mace was a Curtis and brothers of hers were prominent businessmen in the early days of Stratford.

The family in order of birth were Cicely (Mrs Scarlett Watson) Darcy: Sydney (Pip) Mrs Fred McGregor) Wilfred (Burner): George Thomas (for some reason Dick) Lewis Frank (Suppy) and Daisy (Mrs Guy Meredith. I think all are dead except Mrs Watson who was the eldest. I think Mr and Mrs H.J. Green of Omata know her address. She must be approaching 90 years of age.

Marc F. Voullaire

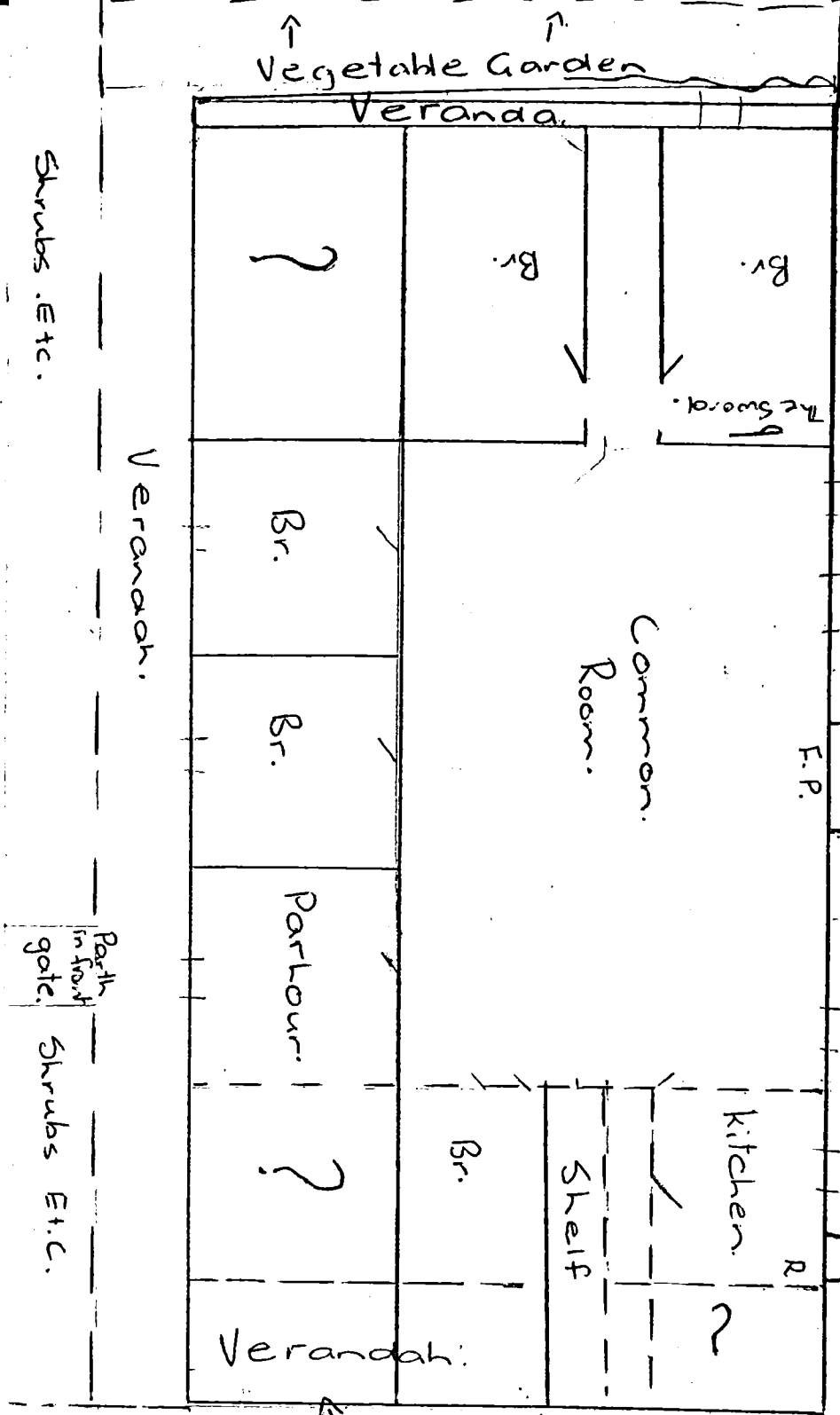
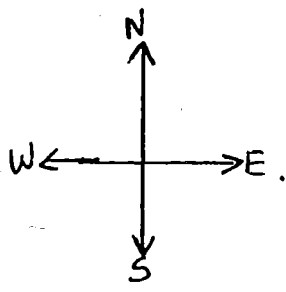
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All this space was all orchard, mainly Apples but also many others. Peaches Plums, Damsons Etc. It sloped down to the bottom of a deep gully.



Regarding the above ? space my mind is a complete blank but I am pretty certain it was not built on.

I cannot remember what was in the spaces marked ? but I am sure or nearly so that the scribbled position was garden with small fruit berries etc.

Given to Reginald Dec 1963

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