

work of both Thatcher and Mountfort. In reality, comparatively few colonial architects possessed the depth and range of historical knowledge that is revealed in the works of these two architects, nor the sophisticated ability to weave historical and contemporary sources into a synthesis that was unmistakably their own. Although we know little of Thatcher's architectural library, we can be certain that Mountfort, if deprived of his own book collection, would have experienced a greater sense of isolation than physical distance from his English roots could ever have made him feel. Indeed, descriptions of Mountfort's Christchurch home reveal that it was filled with books and that the contents of his library ranged from studies of medieval history to contemporary science.⁴¹

A rare glimpse of a colonial architect ordering books for his professional library is found in a letterbook of another prominent Christchurch architect, W. B. Armson (1834-81). Armson arrived in Christchurch in 1870 after pursuing his career in Dunedin, Oamaru and Hokitika.⁴² The extensive range of books he ordered in 1874 from the London bookseller B. T. Batsford suggests that Armson was rebuilding his professional library after some misadventure, either through fire or when shifting office.⁴³ The list of books ordered contains standard works such as Brandon's *An analysis of Gothic architecture* (1847) and *Open timber roofs of the Middle Ages* (1849) along with other more specialised volumes. The order is virtually a checklist of key publications to be found in many architectural offices, both in Britain and its colonies, during the mid-Victorian period. The firm which Armson established in Christchurch in 1870 continued to flourish as Armson, Collins and Harman, subsequently as Collins and Harman, and then as Collins and Son. Over the decades the firm's library continued to grow around the nucleus of books Armson ordered in 1874, but miraculously the library survived intact into the 1990s. When the partnership of Collins Architects was dissolved in 1993 the firm's entire archive, along with its library, was given to the University of Canterbury Library.⁴⁴ This far-sighted action on the part of Armson's successors ensured that his library not only remained intact, but also preserved an essential tool for the detailed analysis of the practice's buildings.

Armson was not the only architect to order books regularly from Batsford in London. The Wellington architect Thomas Turnbull (1824-1907), another inveterate architectural book collector, also used Batsford as his London agent. His biographical entry in the *Cyclopedia of New Zealand* noted that

Mr Batsford, for many years has had a standing order to send out all the best works published about architecture and kindred subjects. [Mr Turnbull's] extensive library therefore contains a valuable collection of architectural works, supposed to be the finest private collection in the Southern Hemisphere.⁴⁵

Whether or not this claim could be sustained, Turnbull's boast illustrates the