

Olveston

Hey guess what?

Following her father's death, Dorothy moved into the master bedroom, carpeting it and the dressing room in the 1950s. She also redecorated her childhood bedroom as a guest room. In a somewhat controversial decision these changes were later 'reversed' in order to present the house to the public as it would have appeared during David and Marie's lifetime.

Digging deeper...

When Olveston was built, Dunedin's Mason and Wales were the supervising architects, Robert Meikle was the builder and H S Bingham was the stonemason. The exterior walls are of brick and plaster with a Moeraki gravel finish and are faced with Oamaru stone.

Who's who

David Edward Theomin (1852-1933) was born in Bristol, England, the third son of Joseph Benjamin-Theomin. He emigrated to Melbourne, Australia in 1874 and married Marie Michaelis five years later. The couple moved to Dunedin in 1879. David Theomin established the Bristol Piano Company, was a member of the Dunedin Chamber of Commerce, and during much of his life, President of the Hebrew Congregation.

Between 35,000 and 40,000 visitors each year make their way through Olveston, formerly the family home of David and Marie Theomin, and their children Edward and Dorothy.

Designed by the fashionable London architect Sir Ernest George, Olveston was built on Dunedin's Royal Terrace, and named after the small village in England where David Theomin had spent holidays as a child. Work began on the 35 room house in 1904 and was completed in 1906. Olveston was built with a sophisticated central heating system, telephone, lift, shower and heated towel rail – all extremely modern at the time. Undoubtedly of more interest to some, however, is the Theomins' 1921 510 Fiat Tourer, restored and housed in the garage.

The first ball was held at Olveston in August 1907 to celebrate Dorothy's debutante status. In both her parents' time at the house and Dorothy's own, it was the scene of many social occasions: 'at homes', afternoon teas and dinner parties. It represents a lifestyle not many shared: there was, for example, a separate library, billiard room and card room, as well as a butler's pantry.

David Theomin died in 1933, predeceased by his wife and son. Dorothy stayed in the house for the rest of her life, making few changes after she inherited it. She left Olveston and its contents to the city of Dunedin in her will in 1966. The house was opened to the public in October 1967.



Olveston stands in an acre of ground with many fine trees



Miss Dorothy Michaelis Theomin, born 1888

