

**CHRISTCHURCH DISTRICT PLAN – SCHEDULED HERITAGE PLACE
HERITAGE ASSESSMENT – STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE
HERITAGE ITEM NUMBER 1455
*FORMER WOODHAM PARK CARETAKER’S DWELLING
AND SETTING -
157 WOODHAM ROAD, CHRISTCHURCH***



PHOTOGRAPH: A OHS, 12 MAY 2022

HISTORICAL AND SOCIAL SIGNIFICANCE

Historical and social values that demonstrate or are associated with: a particular person, group, organisation, institution, event, phase or activity; the continuity and/or change of a phase or activity; social, historical, traditional, economic, political or other patterns.

The former Woodham Park Caretaker's Dwelling and setting are of historical and social significance for their association with Woodham homestead and the Palairet, Shands, Whitcombe and Ivimey families and in particular with its later use as a Council owned public reserve - Woodham Park. It is also associated with the first caretaker Mr A.G Neave, and subsequent caretakers and their families who lived in the house.

The property was originally part of Rural Section 125. The section of land which became Woodham Park and the site of the caretaker's house was owned by John Gwalter Palairet from the 1870s, and was passed on to family following his death in 1878. John lived there with wife Jane and their children - sons - Gwalter, Colthurst and Rowland and daughter Ellen Susanne, who married barrister Henry Slater.

Research to date does not provide a date for the construction of this early house, however it may have been built in the 1870s for Palairet. A house 'of five good rooms, with stable and four acres grass' – possibly Woodham - was advertised for rent in March 1893 by R Palairet, one of John's sons.

The land has a history of subdivision and changes in ownership. In 1900 and 1909 George Hawkes Whitcombe, of the printing company Whitcombe and Tombs Ltd, purchased some of the land. Whitcombe died in 1917. Following Whitcombe's death the house and

approximately 4 acres were on-sold to Robert Shand, a brewer and his wife Lucia. The Shands lived at 'Woodham' until 1936 when the property was advertised for sale. At this time it was described as a substantially built two-storeyed residence with garaging for two cars, loose-boxes (accommodation for horses) and a loft. The property was 3 acres, 1 rood and 5 perches when Frederick Elder Ivimey purchased it from Lucia Shand in 1937. Ivimey was a Captain in the South Island Regiment. He lived at 'Woodham' until 1939 before being recalled for War service. In December of that year he offered the property to the Council for a children's park noting that much of his motivation to do so was to prevent the landscaped grounds of 'Woodham' from being sub-divided.

Having inspected the grounds and house, the Parks Committee agreed that it would be an ideal children's playground and neighbourhood park by virtue of its location, size and maturity of planting and it was formally purchased in October 1940 for £2280. The Park was officially opened by the Mayor and Chairman of the Parks Committee in November 1942.

Council decided to demolish the Woodham homestead and utilise any salvageable materials to construct the caretaker's house and a park pavilion. Demolition of the former residence in July 1941 revealed that exterior timbers were in poor condition and not as much was able to be able to be reused as planned. The City Engineer presented a sketch plan of the house to the Chairman and Members of the Abattoir and Reserves committee on 4 August 1941. The Caretaker's House was under construction in November 1941. Painting, papering and installation of electric light fittings were completed and the house was ready for occupation by February 1942.

There was a Council policy at the time to acquire, wherever possible, a large property in each congested district in the city and convert it to a park and open space for the benefit of the residents (The Press, 8 April 1946, pg 2)

In 1941 Council's activities were restricted to routine maintenance works due to war work. The remodelling and improvements at Woodham Park along with the caretakers house were noted as some of the few new activities in the City by Mayor E.H. Andrews in his review of December 1941 (The Press, 31 December 1941, Pg 9).

Mr A.G Neave was appointed as the first caretaker in Feb 1942. He was 34 years old, married with three children, employed for some years with the Reserves Department (under schemes 5 and 13 –possibly related to Depression era employment relief) and was a resident of the area. His son William Reece Neave was killed on active service in the Air Force (he was a Sergeant Air Gunner) in July 1944 (Ashburton Guardian, 6 July 1944, Pg 4). The Christchurch City Council expressed sympathy for Mr Neave at a meeting on 19 July 1944 (The Press, 20 June 1944, Pg 4). Neave was still the caretaker in 1959 when he won a section of land in a raffle related to Town Hall fundraising. He noted at the time that he expected to retire in four years. Neave was a life member of the North Linwood-Dallington Burgesses' Association (The Press, 26 December 1959, Pg 4).

Mr K.L Chestney is noted as being the caretaker in 1974. The caretaker role included arranging to accommodate the many events in the park such as the children's Christmas Party of the Chch Deaf Club Inc. in 1974.

The house had a resident caretaker up until 1996 and was subsequently a Parks staff residential tenancy until 2009. The house has been vacant since 2009. Only in special circumstances are Parks staff required to live on site nowadays.

In 2022 Parks Staff recommended to the Linwood-Heathcote-Central Community Board that the buildings be demolished, and the vacant land be landscaped to make the park more visible from the street frontage for safety and public awareness of the facility, and also to plant the area. Demolition was opposed by heritage interest groups, which also suggested that the building should have heritage status.

CULTURAL AND SPIRITUAL SIGNIFICANCE

Cultural and spiritual values that demonstrate or are associated with the distinctive characteristics of a way of life, philosophy, tradition, religion, or other belief, including: the symbolic or commemorative value of the place; significance to Tangata Whenua; and/or associations with an identifiable group and esteemed by this group for its cultural values.

The former Woodham Park Caretaker's Dwelling and setting are of cultural significance as they illustrate the way of life of a park caretaker and their family from the 1940s, as well as the practice in this period of sextons and park caretakers living on the site that they serviced. The late 20th century change in use of the dwelling being rented out demonstrates changing attitudes to working and living arrangements with people more commonly preferring to live separately from their place of work. Heritage interest groups expressed opposition to the possibility of Council demolition of the house in early 2022.

The park and provision for associated on site caretaker role reflects the importance of public recreation to the people of Christchurch. This was a period in town planning theory, which prioritised development of play facilities for children as well as responding to identified physical welfare and recreation needs in line with the 1937 physical Welfare and Recreation Act.

The establishment of the park reflects a phase in town planning when there was a move towards providing for adequate numbers of recreation or neighbourhood parks in residential areas. It also reflects the common occurrence in Christchurch whereby the Council purchased large homesteads with substantial grounds for recreation purposes. This typically occurred once the properties passed out of family ownership because the property extended beyond most modern families' needs. Other examples include Avebury House, Abberley Park (part of the homestead remains onsite) and Elmwood Park.

The property is located within the wider cultural landscape of the Ōtākaro - Avon River which was an important part of the interconnected network of traditional Ngāi Tahu travel routes, particularly as an access route through the swampy marshlands of Christchurch. The mouth of the Ōtākaro was a permanent mahinga kai, and the river supported numerous kāinga mahinga kai (food-gathering places). (Kā Huru Manu).

ARCHITECTURAL AND AESTHETIC SIGNIFICANCE

Architectural and aesthetic values that demonstrate or are associated with: a particular style, period or designer, design values, form, scale, colour, texture and material of the place.

The former Woodham Park Caretaker's Dwelling and setting are of architectural and aesthetic significance for their design and materials, some of which were salvaged from the earlier house on the site. It is noted in Council records that windows and doors from the Woodham homestead were reused in the Caretakers cottage.

The house retains its heritage fabric to a high degree. The layout of the house remains intact. The front door faces Woodham Road and is accessed through a simply decorated porch. A high timber dado in dark shellac finish features in the hallway. The central hallway includes a linen cupboard and telephone shelf, both in dark finished timber. The master bedroom, second bedroom, toilet, bathroom and lounge are accessed from this hallway. The lounge features timber panelling, and a tiled fireplace. Window sills and surrounds, along with the doors and architraves are all in a dark finished timber – probably shellac. Original light switches remain throughout including Bakelite/early plastic switch plates. Original kitchen cupboards remain, and a small inbuilt metal food safe remains.

The house features a variety of fenestration – possibly due to some of it having been salvaged from the demolished Woodham homestead. This includes a large, fixed three paned window and multi-paned casement windows either side of a large central single paned window in the lounge. Two leadlight windows are located in the sunroom, which is entered through French doors from the open plan dining and kitchen area. The kitchen area features a multi-paned window within an extended bay. The bathroom includes an original built in mirrored cabinet.

The wash house is within the house, but accessed through a separate external door. This contains the original concrete double tub, timber wall linings and shelving and cupboards. The house has a concrete ring foundation, with timber floor. It would appear that a salvaged door and sash windows have been used in the garden shed which is in a dilapidated state.

The house in its planning illustrates modern trends in architecture with its large windows and unframed glazing, and open plan kitchen and dining nook. The house is oriented towards the sun and includes a sunroom on the north corner. In this respect it has similarities with the Engineer's House at Halswell Quarry, designed by Ewart Somers, acting City Engineer and designed in 1939.

Although it is noted that slates from the previous homestead were used for roofing, the Caretakers residence is now roofed in corrugated iron.

The whole interior contributes to the significance of the heritage item because of its form and materials, and the large extent of heritage fabric that remains throughout. Interior features include the layout and spaces, structure and linings, fixtures, hardware, materials and finishes. These are highly intact and reflect the period in which the house was constructed, and its history of residential use.

TECHNOLOGICAL AND CRAFTSMANSHIP SIGNIFICANCE

Technological and craftsmanship values that demonstrate or are associated with: the nature and use of materials, finishes and/or technological or constructional methods which were innovative, or of notable quality for the period.

The former Caretakers Dwelling and setting are of technological and craftsmanship for its construction, materials and finishes, which reflect the standards, technology and skills of the period in which it was built. The house is of timber weatherboard construction, and features timber panelling which has a shellac finish and leadlight windows, as well as original joinery and hardware. The setting features a stone wall, timber gate and stone edging that demonstrates techniques and craftsmanship skills of the period.

CONTEXTUAL SIGNIFICANCE

Contextual values that demonstrate or are associated with: a relationship to the environment (constructed and natural), a landscape, setting, group, precinct or streetscape; a degree of consistency in terms of type, scale, form, materials, texture, colour, style and/or detail; recognised landmarks and landscape which are recognised and contribute to the unique identity of the environment.

The former Caretakers Dwelling and setting are of high contextual significance for their location adjacent to Woodham Park, for the relationship of the house to the garden and for the landscaping design of the garden. The setting consists of the immediate area around the house, which is fenced off from the park in 2022, but which is not located on a separate land parcel to the park.

The house is situated to the east of the Woodham Road entrance to Woodham Park. The house relates to the park in terms of the design of the wall and gate at its frontage. The house is similar in materials, scale, form, age and design to other houses in Woodham Road.

The frontage of the property features a rubble basalt wall with crenellations and a set of original timber gates which were of the same style as gates which originally featured at the park entrance next door. The garden contains established trees and shrubs, including rhododendron, fuschia, buxus, cherry blossom, cabbage tree, and a golden totara. The driveway and garden are laid out with Halswell quarry stone edging.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND SCIENTIFIC SIGNIFICANCE

Archaeological or scientific values that demonstrate or are associated with: the potential to provide information through physical or scientific evidence and understanding about social

historical, cultural, spiritual, technological or other values of past events, activities, structures or people.

The former Caretakers Dwelling and setting are of archaeological significance because of the potential to provide evidence of human activity, including that prior to 1900. The property is located within the wider cultural landscape activity by Ngāi Tahu for travel and mahinga kai. There is a history of European occupation, farming and planting of the site since at least the 1870s.

SUMMARY ASSESSMENT

The former Woodham Park Caretakers Dwelling, including the whole of the interior, and setting is of overall significance to the Christchurch district including Banks Peninsula.

The former Woodham Park Caretaker's Dwelling and setting are of historical and social significance for their association with Woodham homestead and its later use as the home of caretakers for the adjacent Council owned public reserve - Woodham Park. The former Woodham Park Caretaker's Dwelling and setting are of cultural significance as they illustrate the way of life of a park caretaker and their family from the 1940s, as well as the practice in this period of caretakers living on the site that they serviced, and the changes in this over time. The property is located within the wider cultural landscape of the Ōtākaro (Avon River) which was an important part of the interconnected network of traditional Ngāi Tahu travel routes and which supported numerous kāinga mahinga kai (food-gathering places). The dwelling and setting are of architectural and aesthetic significance as a 1940s dwelling which has retained a high degree of integrity in terms of its original layout, materials, finishes and its garden setting. The former Caretakers Dwelling and setting are of technological and craftsmanship for its construction, materials and finishes, which reflect the standards, technology and skills of the period in which it was built. The former Caretakers Dwelling and setting are of high contextual significance for their location adjacent to Woodham Park, for the relationship of the house to the garden and for the landscaping design of the garden. The former Caretakers Dwelling and setting are of archaeological significance because of the potential to provide evidence of Māori and European activity, including that prior to 1900.

REFERENCES:

Woodham Park Historical Investigation and Assessment, Louise Beaumont, September 2010. TRIM 10/415459

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