

**DISTRICT PLAN – LISTED HERITAGE PLACE
HERITAGE ASSESSMENT – STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE
HERITAGE ITEM NUMBER 1164**

***SIGN OF THE PACKHORSE AND SETTING -
629 KAITUNA VALLEY ROAD, MOTUKARARA***



PHOTOGRAPH: MARGARET LOVELL-SMITH MAY 2012

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 Sign of the Packhorse (historically the Kaituna Saddle Rest House and built in 1916) has high historical and social significance for its association with politician and conservationist Harry Eil (1862-1934) and as a key element within his visionary Summit Road scheme. The great life-long preoccupation of Eil, who served both as a central and local government politician, was the promotion of a summit road from Godley Head to Akaroa, enabling public access to the Port Hills. As part of his vision rest houses, offering refreshments and modest accommodation, would be regularly distributed along a specially constructed walking route linking the Port Hills' reserves (Young, p 107).

The Summit Road Association was founded by Eil in 1909 to foster the objective, and although the ambitious project was incomplete at the time of his death, he had seen a substantial portion of his scheme to fruition, including the establishment of three rest houses: the Sign of the Bellbird (built in 1914), the Sign of the Packhorse (1916) and the Sign of the Kiwi (built in 1917). The Sign of the Takahe, a fourth rest house which Eil had begun in 1918 was completed in 1949, 15 years after his death.

To enable construction of the Sign of the Packhorse construction materials were delivered to the Parkinson homestead in the Kaituna Valley and taken to the saddle, where the hut stands, by bullock team.

The reserve at the Sign of the Packhorse is made up of five separate land titles, together totalling more than 100 hectares. The reserve where the Sign of the Packhorse stands has been used for grazing since the early days of European settlement. The 1.92 hectare block

where the building stands was transferred to the crown as an addition to the Sign of the Packhorse Scenic Reserve in 1973, when it was discovered that the building stood outside the reserve land. The land had previously been held by Mr W A Gray and family since at least 1917.

The reserve and building have been associated with a number of different management bodies over time – the Summit Road Scenic Reserve Board, the Port Hills-Akaroa Summit Road Public Trust (Inc) and the Crown. The Youth Hostel Association leased the site from 1948 and the Outward Bound Old Boys' Association were responsible for its maintenance from 1969. The reserve was transferred to the Department of Conservation (DOC) in 1987 and is still used as a DOC tramping hut today.

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 hut and its setting are of cultural significance because it embodies the emergence in the early 20th century of new attitudes towards environmentalism, as well as contemporary habits of leisure and recreation. Harry Ell is said to have been New Zealand's 'strongest advocate for scenery preservation' in the early 20th century (www.nzhistory.net.nz) and his development of the Summit Road was a tangible expression of a growing modern awareness of the cultural value of scenery and historic sites. At the same time, as standards of living rose, increased leisure time meant that Christchurch residents could visit and enjoy amenities such as Ell's rest houses. The Sign of the Packhorse is particularly significant as the only one of the rest houses which is still used more or less as intended by Harry Ell. It is also significant for its scenic and recreational qualities, and it is a popular recreational destination for walkers, trampers and cyclists. The hut and setting reflect the way of life of people in the city who have a long history of visiting Banks Peninsula for recreation

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 Sign of the Packhorse is of architectural and aesthetic significance for its design by nationally prominent Christchurch architect Samuel Hurst Seager. Constructed of locally quarried volcanic stone, the building is a simple rectangular shape divided into three rooms. It has a gable roof of 'long-run' iron. The porch has a stone arch over the entrance; there is a living room with a wood stove, and two sleeping rooms with nine bunks in total. A photograph from the 1920s shows the living room furnished as a domestic interior. The floor is covered with linoleum, there are casement windows and a mantelpiece over the fireplace which contains a coal or wood range. Due to vandalism of both exterior and interior fittings, all fittings capable of being damaged or destroyed were removed in the 1970s. A woodshed and water tank have been added and a window on the south wall has been boarded over. Rainwater is collected in the water tank to provide a water supply and there is a 'sealed vault' toilet nearby.

The building originally had back-to-back fireplaces in the living room and one of the bunk rooms. The fireplace in the bunkroom was removed (c.1980s) and a wood-burning stove installed in the fireplace in the living room. The mantelpiece has also been removed. The other significant changes to the building have been the replacement of window frames and

the wooden floor. The windows were replaced in about 1992-94 with macrocarpa wooden frames, made to replicate those at the Sign of the Kiwi, another of Ell's rest houses. In 2002 the floorboards, which had become rotten and were full of borer, were replaced with a new macrocarpa floor. In the same year DOC replaced the wooden bunks in the two sleeping rooms. The building sustained some minor damage in the June 2011 earthquakes, but remains open to the public.

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 Sign of the Packhorse is of technological and craftsmanship significance for its construction in locally quarried stone and as one of only a few buildings built of locally quarried stone that are still standing in the Lyttelton Harbour area. The interior includes painted timber panelling, and a built in table beside the fireplace.

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 Sign of the Packhorse is of high contextual significance for its location in open, grazed grassland, with areas of native bush nearby, distinctive landforms, and magnificent panoramic views over the Lyttelton Harbour basin and across the Port Hills to the plains and mountains beyond. The Sign of the Packhorse hut is accessed by unformed legal roads from the Kaituna Valley Road, Gebbies Pass and other walking tracks. Situated at a low point of the ridge that runs between Mt Bradley and the volcanic rock outcrop known as the Remarkable Dykes, the Sign of the Packhorse is a landmark that can be seen against the skyline from many parts of the Lyttelton Harbour basin and the Port Hills. It is also contextually significant because of its links with the Sign of the Bellbird, and the Sign of the Kiwi as one of a planned series of Summit Road rest houses. The Sign of the Packhorse was the second of the three rest houses to be built. These are all constructed of locally quarried stone, and are small scale, modest structures that relate to their location and blend into the landscape. The setting consists of the immediate land parcel which includes a woodshed, water tank, toilet building and an expanse of introduced pasture with silver tussock.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND SCIENTIFIC SIGNIFICANCE

Archaeological or scientific values that demonstrate or are associated with: the potential to provide information through physical or scientific evidence an understanding about social historical, cultural, spiritual, technological or other values of past events, activities, structures or people.

The Sign of the Packhorse and setting are of archaeological significance for their potential to hold evidence of human activity, including that related to construction, and including that which pre dates 1900.

ASSESSMENT STATEMENT

The Sign of the Packhorse and setting are of overall high significance to Banks Peninsula and Christchurch. The building has high historical and social significance for its association with Harry Ell and his vision and efforts to establish the Summit Road and associated series of rest houses along it. The hut and setting are of cultural significance as they reflect the way of life of people of Christchurch who have a long history of visiting Banks Peninsula for recreation. The hut is of architectural and aesthetic significance for its vernacular design by Samuel Hurst Seagar and of technological and craftsmanship significance for its construction in local stone. The Sign of the Packhorse and its setting are of high contextual significance for the qualities of the landscape the hut is located in, and the way the building relates to its surroundings and the other Ell rest houses through its materials and design. The Sign of the Packhorse and setting are of archaeological significance for their potential to hold evidence of human activity, including that related to construction, and including that which pre dates 1900.

REFERENCES:

CCC Heritage file – Kaituna Saddle – Sign of the Packhorse Hut

'Historic Sign of the Packhorse Hut', www.doc.govt.nz

Sign of the Packhorse, interior [ca. 1920] File Reference CCL Photo CD 5, IMG0087
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<http://christchurchcitylibraries.com/heritage/photos/disc3/IMG0023.asp>

Information from Ian Hill, of the DOC Mahaanui Area Office.

'Kaituna Rest House: Piece of Old New Zealand', *Star*, 29 March 1917, p 5

David Young, *Our Islands, Our Selves: A History of Conservation in New Zealand*, (Otago, 2004)

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PLEASE NOTE THIS ASSESSMENT IS BASED ON INFORMATION AVAILABLE AT THE TIME OF WRITING. DUE TO THE ONGOING NATURE OF HERITAGE RESEARCH, FUTURE REASSESSMENT OF THIS HERITAGE ITEM MAY BE NECESSARY TO REFLECT ANY CHANGES IN KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF ITS HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE.

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