

**DISTRICT PLAN – LISTED HERITAGE PLACE
HERITAGE ASSESSMENT – STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE
HERITAGE ITEM NUMBER 1203
*BRIDLE PATH – 915 SUMMIT ROAD,
HEATHCOTE/LYTTELTON***



PHOTOGRAPH : BRENDAN SMYTH, 2014

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 Bridle Path and its setting has high historical and social significance to Christchurch and Lyttelton as a tangible reminder of the experiences of the early settlers in the region and as a vital part of the early settlers' lives. It is the walking route used by first settlers to cross the Port Hills from Lyttelton to Christchurch and runs from Lyttelton to the Summit Road and then down into the Heathcote Valley where it meets with the Bridle Path Road at the Tunnel Road portal. Before the route was constructed there was a route to Sumner and then on to Heathcote but it was longer and more difficult. Due to uncertainty around the completion of the Sumner Road Captain Joseph Thomas was commissioned by Chief Surveyor John Godley to work on the Bridle Path route in the hope that it would become a shortcut and

passable for horses. Work commenced in 1850 and the path was finished early 1851 and then further developed later that year.

The Bridle Path was the main route into Christchurch until the Lyttelton tunnel opened in 1867 and was therefore of great importance to the Lyttelton and Canterbury settlements. There were many articles throughout the 1850s on the state of the route and need for it to be improved, particularly when bad weather put a stop to all communications between the Port and Christchurch. The unchanging appearance of the route, its relatively unbuilt up surroundings and free access mean that it has remained an important reminder of the early settler's experiences to the present day and it is still well used. There are many commemorative seats and memorials along the track. It also provided the route for New Zealand's first telegraph route, opened on 1 July 1862 from Lyttelton to Christchurch. During World War II the route provided a sentry point to the Lyttelton Fortress area when two strong points were built on the path overlooking Lyttelton. These were lookout posts and shelter above landing sites, forming part of the larger coastal defence system around Lyttelton Harbour and Godley Head.

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 Bridle Path has high cultural significance as a vital part of the early colonial settlers' experiences and daily lives and it has remained an important reminder of their experiences to the present day. It symbolises the hardships and experiences of early settlers. Schoolchildren in Christchurch are often taken to walk the Bridle Path to learn about the early settlers and descendants of the settlers see it as a direct link to their family. The route receives regular use and an annual Bridle Path Walk is held on Anniversary Day, 16 December, commemorating the arrival of the First Four Ships. The then Prime Minister, Hon. Helen Clark, attended the commemorative walk in 2000 as part of the 150th Canterbury celebrations. The cultural significance of the route is also evidenced in the memorials along the route commemorating the pioneers of Canterbury, in particular its women.

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 Bridle Path has aesthetic significance through its natural surroundings and unchanging appearance. While it is a manmade route undertaken purely for necessity it has remained formed in a manner that respects the natural aesthetic of its setting. It is notable for its steepness, the relative roughness of the terrain and the surrounding farmland. There are scenic views from both sides of the track.

There is some architectural value in the numerous stone monuments and shelters along the way, which are examples of basic colonial vernacular stonework. The memorial seats are constructed of volcanic stone in mortar and wood, with a stone backrest and a wooden plank in front held up by three stone supports. The Pioneer Women's Memorial, erected in 1939 to mark the point where the women rested after their climb from Lyttelton, is also constructed of volcanic stone and is a hexagonal pavilion with three built walls and two pillars and a steep shingled roof. There are two World War II sentry boxes which are built structures of historical

interest for their part in the wider coastal defence system around Lyttelton Harbour and Godley Head.

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.

There is craftsmanship and technological significance both in the original construction of the Bridle Path itself, which was difficult at the time due to the steepness of the terrain and the tools available, and in the design and construction of the memorials along the Bridle path.

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 Bridle Path and its setting has high contextual significance as part of a network of pathways around the Port Hills. Together with the tracks around Godley Head and the Crater Rim walkway they provide views of Christchurch, Sumner, Lyttelton and the bays of Banks Peninsula. The route itself also retains contextual significance through still being an earth road which would look similar to how it looked in the early pioneering days, still surrounded by rocky tussock-covered hillside. Other elements in the story of the provision of access to Christchurch from its port, such as the Sumner Rd, the Moorhouse Rail Tunnel, and remnants of the Ferrymead ferry landing, railway embankment and railway wharf also remain in the vicinity, as do elements of the defence system constructed over the years to defend the harbour.

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 Bridle Path has archaeological significance because it has the potential to provide archaeological evidence relating to human activity on the route, including that which occurred prior to 1900.

ASSESSMENT STATEMENT

The Bridle Path and its setting has overall high significance to Christchurch including Banks Peninsula. It has high historical and social significance to Christchurch and Lyttelton as a tangible reminder of the experiences of the early settlers in the region and as a vital part of the early settlers' lives. The Bridle Path has high cultural significance as a vital part of the early colonial settlers' experiences and daily lives and it has remained an important reminder of their experiences to the present day. It symbolises the hardships and experiences of early settlers. The Bridle Path has aesthetic significance through its natural surroundings and unchanging appearance. While it is a manmade route undertaken purely for necessity it has remained formed in a manner that respects the natural aesthetic of its setting. It is notable

for its steepness, the relative roughness of the terrain and the surrounding farmland. The Bridle Path is part of a network of pathways around the Port Hills. Together with the tracks around Godley Head and the Crater Rim walkway they provide views of Christchurch, Sumner, Lyttelton and the bays of Banks Peninsula. It has some architectural value in the numerous stone monuments and shelters along the way, which are examples of basic colonial vernacular stonework. The Bridle Path has craftsmanship and technological significance both in the original construction of the Bridle Path itself, which was difficult at the time due to the steepness of the terrain and the tools available, and in the memorials along the path. The Bridle Path and its setting has high contextual significance as part of a network of pathways around the Port Hills. Together with the tracks around Godley Head and the Crater Rim walkway they provide views of Christchurch, Sumner, Lyttelton and the bays of Banks Peninsula. It also has contextual significance through still being an earth road which would look similar to how it looked in the early pioneering days, still surrounded by rocky tussock-covered hillside. The Bridle Path has archaeological significance because it has the potential to provide archaeological evidence relating to human activity on the path, including that which occurred prior to 1900.

REFERENCES:

Baird, Rosemary, *Background Information Listed Heritage Place, The Bridle Path Route: Lyttelton to Heathcote Valley*, 2011

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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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