

**DISTRICT PLAN – LISTED HERITAGE PLACE
HERITAGE ASSESSMENT – STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE
HERITAGE ITEM NUMBER 675
*DWELLING AND SETTING, OHINETAHI - 31 GOVERNORS
BAY-TEDDINGTON ROAD, GOVERNORS BAY***



PHOTOGRAPH: 2010

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.

Ohinetahi has high historical and social significance for its association with pioneering naturalist Thomas Potts, prominent architects Sir Miles Warren and John Trengrove and John's wife Pauline, as an important colonial homestead and as centre of hospitality in Canterbury in the colonial period, and again over the last thirty five years.

Ōhinetahi Valley was the site of a Ngāti Māmoe pā. The pā was captured by Te Rakiwhakaputa of Ngāi Tahu around 300 years ago, and subsequently inhabited by the Rangatira Manuhiri. Manuhiri had numerous sons but only a single daughter. Ōhinetahi means 'place of one daughter'.

The land on which the dwelling *Ohinetahi* stands was purchased from the Crown by A. A. Dobbs. Dobbs leased it to Christopher Calvert who built a dwelling *Rosemary Cottage* there in 1853. In 1855 the property was sold to William Moorhouse, who twice served as Superintendent of Canterbury Province. In 1858 Moorhouse sold the property to Thomas Potts.

Thomas Henry Potts (1824-1888) was one of New Zealand's most prominent early conservationists. Following his arrival in Canterbury in 1854 Potts became a substantial

pastoralist, eventually owning seven runs totalling over 81,000 ha. Hakatere Station in the upper Rangitata, his first run, contains the Potts River, the Potts Range and Mt Potts. From 1858 however, the Potts family lived at *Ohinetahi*, which was expanded to 572 acres. To accommodate his thirteen children, Potts made extensive stone additions to the existing timber dwelling between 1865 and 1867. During the Potts family residence, *Ohinetahi* was the scene of lavish parties and balls. An extensive garden and orchards were also planted. Thomas Potts had an active public life and served as a member of the Canterbury Provincial Council. His chief preoccupation however was natural history. Potts was a keen ornithologist and a consistent advocate for conservation of native species. He lost his fortune in the depression of the 1880s, and *Ohinetahi* was sold in 1887.

Ohinetahi changed hands several times during the twentieth century. In 1978 current owner, the noted architect Miles (now Sir Miles) Warren, purchased it in partnership with his sister Pauline and her husband, architect John Trengrove. Sir Miles Warren is one of New Zealand's most well-known architects. He studied Brutalism whilst working in London in the 1950s, and controversially introduced the new style to Christchurch with his Dorset Street Flats in 1956. His architectural firm Warren and Mahoney helped forge a regional architectural style for Canterbury, and designed some of New Zealand's most notable buildings of the 1960s and 1970s. It remains a high-profile practice today. Sir Miles has been the recipient of many awards and accolades, and was appointed to the Order of New Zealand in 1995. The late John Trengrove was also a notable Canterbury architect, and was a principal of the practice Trengrove, Trengrove and Marshall.

Miles Warren and the Trengroves restored the *Ohinetahi* homestead and began the development of a spectacular garden that continues through to the present. The house and garden have hosted many social events in the intervening years, and the garden is regularly open to the public. In 1995 Warren became sole owner of the property, subsequently gifting it to New Zealand in 2012. *Ohinetahi* is now administered for the nation by the Ohinetahi Charitable Trust. The house was severely damaged in the Canterbury Earthquakes of 2010 and 2011. In carrying out repairs and restoration Warren made a substantial alteration to its appearance.

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.

Ohinetahi has cultural significance as the site of a Ngāti Māmoe and Ngāi Tahu pa – from which the property takes its name - as a house which reflects the lifestyle of a well-to-do family in the early colonial era, and as a house which has been altered and extended to reflect circumstances and the individual requirements of its various owners.

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.

Ohinetahi has high architectural and aesthetic significance as a large and unusual colonial homestead, substantially redesigned by prominent Canterbury architect Sir Miles Warren. The garden and park is also a significant design feature.

The first European building at *Ohinetahi* was a simple prefabricated cottage erected by Christopher Calvert in 1853. Thomas Potts split Calvert's home across its width, drew the sections apart and inserted a large three storey Regency-style stone wing. The construction of a substantial masonry dwelling was very unusual in this period. The timber and stone portions of the dwelling were united by a deep verandah which skirted the four principal elevations. Pott's alterations gave the dwelling a distinctive appearance.

Ohinetahi suffered neglect during the twentieth century and was significantly restored and renovated by Sir Miles Warren and the Trengroves following their purchase. Their alterations included converting the original kitchen area into a dining room, installing a new kitchen, adding a conservatory and converting the five bedrooms on the first floor to three larger rooms.

The house sustained considerable damage in the Canterbury Earthquakes of 2010 and 2011. Although the timber wings remained in good condition, the stone portion suffered partial collapse. A major project to strengthen and partially rebuild the stone section of the house was undertaken to designs by Warren during 2011-2012. Although this work was executed in the spirit of the original house and important heritage elements were re-employed, it has altered its appearance significantly.

After purchasing the property in 1978, Warren and the Trengroves began the development of a garden around what remained of the original plantings by Thomas Potts. This garden has continued to evolve and develop through the last four decades, and is now considered one of the foremost landscape gardens in the country and a significant work of design in its own right. In order to protect and maintain his homestead and garden in perpetuity, Sir Miles gifted the *Ohinetahi* property to Ohinetahi Charitable Trust in 2012.

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.

Ohinetahi has technological and craftsmanship significance for the manner in which it exhibits a number of different building technologies and materials, and the work of many craftsmen executed over a period of 150 years.

The original house has the capacity to reveal materials and construction techniques employed in, and craftsmanship executed in the colonial era. *Ohinetahi* is particularly notable for its substantial stone portion, which was an unusual and expensive material at the time. The house retains many of its original features including doors, skirtings, architraves and the curved timber and iron staircase. Over the last forty years, the house has been strengthened, repaired and altered on a number of occasions by Miles Warren, most notably after the Canterbury Earthquakes of 2010 and 2011. Contemporary technologies and materials have been employed in the completion of these works.

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.

Ohinetahi has high contextual significance on its site, within its setting and as an element of a wider context. The setting of the dwelling is its immediate parcel. The dwelling is centrally located in an elevated position on a large irregular parcel between the Governor's Bay Road and the foreshore of Lyttelton Harbour. The northern boundary is roughly defined by the Ohinetahi Stream. The dwelling is surrounded by extensive gardens and outbuildings that include a purpose-built art gallery. The garden extends into a neighbouring parcel. The dwelling and its setting retain their original rural context. This wider context includes the original 1850s coastal road below the property, the heritage-listed stone culvert crossing the Ohinetahi Stream, and the heritage-listed St Cuthbert's Anglican Church, which Thomas Potts had a significant role in establishing.

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.

Ohinetahi and its setting are of archaeological significance because they have the potential to provide archaeological evidence relating to past building construction methods and materials, and human activity on the site, including that which occurred prior to 1900. Ohinetahi valley was the site of a Ngāti Māmoē pā, subsequently occupied by Ngāti Tahu. Consequently there is potential for evidence of Māori activity in the area.

ASSESSMENT STATEMENT

Ohinetahi is of high overall significance to the Christchurch district including Banks Peninsula. The dwelling has high historical and social significance for its association with pioneering naturalist Thomas Potts, prominent Canterbury architects Sir Miles Warren and John Trengrove and John's wife Pauline, as an important colonial homestead and as centre of hospitality in Canterbury at various times over the last 150 years. The dwelling has cultural significance as the site of a Ngāti Māmoē and Ngāti Tahu pa – from which the property takes its name, as a home which reflects the lifestyle of a well-to-do family in the early colonial era, and as a house which has been altered and extended to reflect circumstances and the individual requirements of its various owners. The dwelling has high architectural and aesthetic significance as a large and unusual colonial homestead, substantially redesigned by Sir Miles. The well-known garden is also a significant design feature in its own right. The dwelling has technological and craftsmanship significance for the manner in which it exhibits a number of different building technologies and materials, and the work of many craftsmen executed over a period of 150 years. Of particular note is the unusual stone portion of the original house and the features contained within, and the works carried out to strengthen and repair the house under the direction of Miles Warren over the last thirty five years. The dwelling has high contextual significance on its elevated site in its important landscape garden setting. *Ohinetahi* and its setting are of archaeological significance because they have the potential to provide archaeological evidence relating to past building construction methods and materials, and human activity on the site, including that which occurred prior to 1900.

REFERENCES:

Clare Kelly *Background Information Listed Heritage Item: Ohinetahi* March 2014.

REPORT DATED: **UPDATED: 14/01/2015**

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.

PLEASE USE IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE CCC HERITAGE FILES.