

**DISTRICT PLAN – LISTED HERITAGE PLACE
HERITAGE ASSESSMENT – STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE
HERITAGE ITEM NUMBER 730
*ST JOHN THE EVANGELIST CHURCH AND SETTING – 4183
CHRISTCHURCH – AKAROA ROAD, LITTLE RIVER***



PHOTOGRAPH: SIMON DAISLEY, 2013

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 Catholic Church of St John the Evangelist has historical and social significance having served the Catholic community of Little River from 1925 until it was closed following the 2010/2011 Canterbury earthquakes. The church stands on land that was purchased by Christopher Dampier, the solicitor for the Canterbury Association, in 1865. Dampier returned to England in 1867 and his Little River holding was subsequently transferred to his son-in-law Andrew Allan. In 1873 Allan donated part of the property as the site for a government school. In c.1880 there were only four Catholics living in Little River so mass was first held in a private home and later moved between the school building, the Maori Hall and the library. The Catholic community purchased the former school building in 1894. The church was designed by Christchurch architect Henry St Aubyn Murray, construction started in November 1924 and it was completed in the following year. Catholic services are currently being held in the village service centre while the church is closed awaiting repair.

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 church has cultural and spiritual significance as the site of Catholic worship in Little River since the late 19th century and the focal point for the Little River Catholic community since 1926.

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 Catholic Church of St John the Evangelist has architectural and aesthetic significance as an example of an inter-war Gothic Revival country church designed by Christchurch architect Henry St Aubyn Murray. Murray practised architecture in Christchurch between the wars. He took over Frederick Barlow's practice on the latter's death and among his many Catholic churches his best known is the Catholic Church of the Holy Name in Ashburton (1930).

The church is aligned southwest to northeast, with the northeast gable end facing the road. The walls are of random rubble stone, and the building has a slate gabled roof, which was topped at the northeast end by a stone belfry before it collapsed in the earthquakes. At the northeast end was the entrance porch, which was damaged by the belfry falling onto it. The church is lit by lancet windows with Oamaru stone surrounds. There are small extensions with side doors on both the north and south elevations. Internally the church has an open timber roof and plastered interior. Although damaged by the Canterbury earthquakes it still retains much of its original form and fabric.

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 Catholic Church of St John the Evangelist has technological and craftsmanship significance as a Gothic Revival building constructed from random rubble Halswell stone with Oamaru stone dressings.

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 Catholic Church of St John the Evangelist and its setting has contextual significance for its landmark location and its relationship to other listed heritage items in the vicinity. The church is sited at the southern end of Little River on the corner of the main Christchurch Akaroa Road and Morrisons Road. It is the starting point of the Little River streetscape which contains other historic buildings including the Little River Railway building, the Little River Library and the War Memorial Gates outside Awa-Iti Domain. St Andrew's Anglican Church is also a listed heritage building within the Little River community. The setting of the Catholic Church of St John the Evangelist includes the land parcel on the corner of the main Christchurch Akaroa Road and Morrisons Road; the church is set amongst mature trees.

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 Catholic Church of St John the Evangelist and its setting have archaeological significance because of 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.

ASSESSMENT STATEMENT

The Catholic Church of St John the Evangelist has overall significance to Banks Peninsula and Christchurch.. The church has historical and social significance as Little River's Catholic church since 1925 and cultural and spiritual significance as the focal point for Little River's Catholic community. The building has architectural and aesthetic significance as an example of a Gothic Revival country church designed by Christchurch architect Henry St Aubyn Murray. The Catholic Church of St John the Evangelist has technological and craftsmanship significance as a masonry building constructed from Halswell and Oamaru stone. The Catholic Church of St John the Evangelist and its setting have contextual significance for its landmark location and its relationship to other listed heritage items in the vicinity. The Catholic Church of St John the Evangelist and its setting have archaeological significance because of 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:

Christchurch City Council Heritage files, *4183 Christchurch-Akaroa Road, Little River The Catholic Church of St John the Evangelist*
Daisley, Simon, *Background Information Listed Heritage Place, St John the Evangelist (Catholic) Church – 4183 Christchurch-Akaroa Road, 2013*
Historic place # 5293 – Heritage NZ List: <http://www.heritage.org.nz/the-list/details/5293>
<http://www.akaroacatholicparish.co.nz/little-river-church/>
Akaroa Mail and Banks Peninsula Advertiser 28 November 1924, p. 3.

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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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