

**CHRISTCHURCH DISTRICT PLAN – SCHEDULED HERITAGE PLACE  
HERITAGE ASSESSMENT – STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE  
HERITAGE ITEM NUMBER 219  
*ARMAGH STREET BRIDGE AND SETTING - ARMAGH STREET  
BETWEEN DURHAM -OXFORD, CHRISTCHURCH***



**PHOTOGRAPH: CHRISTCHURCH CITY COUNCIL FEBRUARY 2024**

### **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 Armagh Street Bridge has high historical significance as one of a number of historic central city bridges over the Ōtākaro Avon River, built not only for function, but also as ornamental instances of civic pride. Designed by City Surveyor Charles Walkden, the Armagh Street Bridge had its formal opening, by Mayor Ruddenklau, on New Year's Day 1884. It replaced an earlier timber bridge erected in 1872 and was built by Messrs Grieg and Hunter.

Tracks for the inner-city Christchurch Tramway were laid over the bridge in c1993. The bridge was damaged in the 2010-2011 earthquake and was subsequently repaired and reopened.

### **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 Armagh Street Bridge has cultural significance for its association with the Ōtākaro Avon River and the city's distinctive character and identity as a river city. The site and setting of the bridge, adjacent to Victoria/Market Square and the site of Puari Pā, have cultural and spiritual significance to tangata whenua as does the Ōtākaro Avon River which was highly regarded as a mahinga kai area by Waitaha, Ngāti Māmoe and Ngāi Tahu.

## **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 Armagh Street Bridge has high architectural significance for the manner in which it follows the model established for central city bridges by the Victoria Square Bridge of 1864, and complements the city's Gothic Revival architectural character. The bridge has aesthetic significance for its stone and stucco-faced arched form and iron Gothic Revival balustrading. It is of brick arch construction and was designed by a senior member of Council staff, Surveyor and engineer Charles Walkden (1824-1908), who had worked in Austria and Denmark for a number of years before arriving in Christchurch in 1871. In 1874 he was appointed City Surveyor to the City Council, a position he held for 22 years. During this time, Walkden was responsible for designing many of the bridges in central Christchurch. The bridge was built by William Grieg (1836-1911), who was born in Rothesay in Scotland and arrived in Christchurch in 1860 where he worked on the Lyttelton Railway Tunnel before taking the contract for the Bank of Australasia. Grieg worked as a builder in the city for 8 years and then farmed at Ashley for a period before going into partnership in 1876 with John Hunter. They were responsible for a number of large masonry buildings such as the Supreme Court (demolished), part of Sunnyside (demolished) as well as building the former Girls' High School (demolished) and Boys' High School.

## **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 Armagh Street Bridge has high technological significance for what it may reveal in terms of the materials and construction methodologies employed at the time. It is a single-span brick-arched bridge, which is supported on unreinforced concrete foundations. The bridge's stone facing, and cast-iron railing, exhibit a high degree of craftsmanship. The latter was made by a local foundry.

## **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 Armagh Street Bridge has high contextual significance for its association with the Ōtākaro Avon River, its proximity to the Canterbury Provincial Council Buildings, Victoria Square and the former buildings of the Christchurch District Court. The bridge carries Armagh Street across the Ōtākaro Avon River between Durham Street and Oxford Terrace. It also has high contextual significance in relation to a number of other 19<sup>th</sup> century bridges in the inner city, including those in Victoria Square (1864), Worcester Street (1885), Armagh

Street's Park Bridge (1885), at the Rolleston Avenue entrance to Hagley Park, Gloucester Street (1886-87), and Colombo Street (1902). Charles Walkden designed all of the aforementioned bridges that were erected in the 1880s.

## **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 Armagh Street Bridge and its setting has archaeological significance because it has the potential to provide evidence of human activity and construction methods and materials, including those that occurred prior to 1900.

## **ASSESSMENT STATEMENT**

The Armagh Street Bridge and its setting has high overall significance to Christchurch, including Banks Peninsula, as one of a number of masonry and iron Victorian bridges over the Ōtākaro Avon River. It has high historical significance as the product of a period when many of the city's bridges were being upgraded, both to provide a more effective transport infrastructure and to ornament the city. The Armagh Street Bridge has cultural significance for its association with the city's distinctive character and identity. The site and setting of the bridge, adjacent to Victoria/Market Square and the site of Puari Pā, have cultural and spiritual significance to tangata whenua, as does the Ōtākaro Avon River. The bridge has high architectural and aesthetic significance for the quality of its design, its positive relationship to its immediate environment, and its association with City Surveyor, Charles Walkden and builder William Grieg. The Armagh Street Bridge has high technological significance for what it may reveal in terms of the materials and construction methodologies employed at the time. The Armagh Street Bridge and its setting has high contextual significance as an important component of the city's network of heritage bridges, and a contributor to the city's broader Gothic Revival character and heritage. The Armagh Street Bridge and its setting have archaeological significance because it has the potential to provide evidence of human activity and construction methods and materials, including those that occurred prior to 1900.

### **REFERENCES:**

Historic place # 1830 – Heritage New Zealand List

<http://www.heritage.org.nz/the-list/details/1830>

John Ince *A City of Bridges. A History of Bridges over the Avon and Heathcote Rivers in Christchurch* (Christchurch, 1998)

**REPORT DATED: 10 JANUARY 2015**

**UPDATED: MARCH 2024**

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 CHRISTCHURCH CITY COUNCIL HERITAGE FILES.