

**DISTRICT PLAN – LISTED HERITAGE PLACE  
HERITAGE ASSESSMENT – STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE  
HERITAGE ITEM NUMBER 606  
*FORMER DWELLING AND SETTING – 95 AND 95A  
OXFORD TERRACE, CHRISTCHURCH***



**PHOTOGRAPH: M.VAIR-PIOVA, 11/12/2014**

**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.*

95 Oxford Terrace has historical and social significance for its association with its first owner, Dr Fitzgerald Westenra (1859-1917), with the provision of medical services in the city, and as a reminder of the former residential nature of this part of the inner city. The triangular site originally bounded by Oxford Terrace, Lichfield Street and Durham Street was a reserve formally vested in the Anglican Church Property Trustees in 1856. Christ's College was briefly located here until shifting to its present site in 1858. For the fifty years that followed, the site was leased to a variety of lessees. In 1907 part of the site was let to Dr Westenra, who commissioned Collins and Harman architects to design a family home and surgery.

Fitzgerald Westenra was born in Christchurch, a son of Richard Westenra, an early Canterbury settler. Westenra Terrace in Cashmere is named after his sister Sarah. After receiving his medical education in Edinburgh, Fitzgerald Westenra returned to Christchurch in 1886 and served briefly as house surgeon at Christchurch Hospital before departing for

private practise in Hawera. He came back to Christchurch around the turn of the century, and entered into partnership with Dr Palmer. When the partnership was dissolved, he went into practise on his own. At the time of his sudden death from pleurisy in 1917, Westenra was honorary surgeon to Christchurch Hospital and surgeon to the police force. His wife Bessie, nee Scott, and their two children remained at their Oxford Terrace home until 1926, when the building was sold to dentist Charles Newell. Medical and related professions maintained consulting rooms in the house until the mid-1970s, having been joined by a car dealership on the ground floor in the 1960s. In 1971 the building was acquired by New Zealand Mutual Funds, who planned to build a new office block on the site, but eventually decided to go elsewhere. In the late 1970s, all the other buildings on the block were cleared when Durham Street was extended to meet Cambridge Terrace as part of the new one-way system. The section of Oxford Terrace to the west of the house was closed at this time. In 1981 the house was purchased by insurance broker George Scrimshaw who restored the building. Tiffany's Restaurant moved in to the building in 1984 and subsequently became one of the city's best-known restaurants Tiffanys. In 2000 the Community Trust occupied the first floor but has more recently relocated to Addington. The ground floor is still in use as a restaurant renamed Regatta on Avon.

### **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 former dwelling has cultural significance as it demonstrates the way of life of a city doctor who maintained his surgery in his home and lived in a part of the city close to Christchurch Hospital. As the city grew the building ceased to be used as a domestic residence and became a commercial property which is reflective of cultural societal habits and changes of use - a not uncommon fate for early colonial inner city domestic buildings. The building's location, on the south bank of the River Avon has cultural significance for tangata whenua, in view of its location on Otakaro (River Avon), a mahinga kai for tangata whenua.

### **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.*

95 Oxford Terrace has architectural and aesthetic significance as an example of the 'Old English' variant of the Domestic Revival movement, designed by prominent Christchurch architectural firm Collins and Harman. The firm had been established by William Barnett Armson in 1870. After serving his articles with Armson, John James Collins (1855-1933) bought the practice after the former's death in 1883 and took Richard Dacre Harman (1859-1927) into partnership four years later. In the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Armson, Collins and Harman became one of Christchurch's leading architectural practices. Notable examples of the firm's work included the Christchurch Press Building (1909, demolished), the Nurses' Memorial Chapel at Christchurch Public Hospital (1927), and many of the buildings at Canterbury College.

The Old English style was introduced to Christchurch in the early 1890s by the England Brothers, and was adopted by city's social elite as a sign of social and economic success. Many of Christchurch's most notable houses from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, such as Mona Vale and, Daresbury were designed in the style, which was regularly employed through until the

end of the 1920s. Other Old English houses by Collins and Harman include The Curator's House in the Botanic Gardens (1920). Common characteristics of the style which feature at 95 Oxford Terrace include asymmetrical planning, multiple gables, half-timbering, jettied upper floors, casement windows and the extensive use of roughcast plaster. The house has been extensively altered during its history, and the ground floor retains little of its original form or detail.

## **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.*

95 Oxford Terrace has technological and craftsmanship significance for what it may reveal of Edwardian construction methodologies, materials, fixtures and fittings. It also demonstrates the use of materials and architectural detailing that was typical of Old English style homes of this period. It is a large timber and plaster house with a Marseilles tile roof.

## **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 former dwelling has high contextual significance for its landmark quality and relationship with the surrounding environment. 95 Oxford Terrace is centrally located on a large triangular site formed by the intersection of Oxford Terrace with Durham and Lichfield Streets. At the rear of the house, in the apex of the triangle, is a carpark. The main, west-facing façade of the house overlooks extensive lawns that slope down to the River Avon.

Originally the setting of the house comprised of other residential and commercial buildings, but these were removed in the 1970s, when the section of Cambridge Terrace across the Avon River opposite the house was stopped. 95 Oxford Terrace is highly visible from the two busy streets which run past it and is therefore a prominent city landmark. The neighbouring context of the house consists primarily of modern commercial and industrial buildings, but prominent heritage structures in the vicinity include the Bridge of Remembrance, St Michael and All Angels' Anglican Church and School, and Rhododendron Island, which was the site of the town's first public swimming baths between 1877 and 1886. The former dwelling also has a contextual relationship with the Pegasus Arms at 14 Oxford Terrace, given that both buildings share a common history as the homes of medical practitioners.

## **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 former dwelling and its setting are of archaeological significance because they have the potential to provide archaeological evidence relating to past construction methods and materials, and human activity on the site, including that which occurred before 1900. Fook's map of the central city shows that there were a number of buildings on this triangular land

parcel by 1862 and it was very built up by 1877, as can be seen in Lambert's map of that year.

## **ASSESSMENT STATEMENT**

The former dwelling and its setting has overall significance to Christchurch, including Banks Peninsula as an Edwardian former inner city dwelling and Doctors surgery later commercial premises and noted restaurant. The building has historical significance for its association with Dr Fitzgerald Westenra and its use as a combined family home and medical surgery and cultural significance as a demonstration of the way of life that entailed. It has significance for its later reuse as offices and a restaurant reflecting changes in the residential nature of the area. The former dwelling has architectural significance for its association with Collins and Harman and as an example of the Old English domestic architectural style. The building has technological and craftsmanship significance for what it may reveal of Edwardian construction methodologies, materials, fixtures and fittings. It has contextual significance as a prominent landmark that serves as a reminder of the mixed-use character of the area in decades past. The former dwelling has archaeological significance in view of the location of the property and its development as a build site since the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century.

## **REFERENCES:**

CCC Heritage File Former Dwelling 'Tiffany's': 95 Oxford Terrace

*Tudor House: A Christchurch Survivor* [undated, author unknown]

John Wilson 'Housing for People, Cars and Diners' *Press* [undated clipping]

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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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