



**DISTRICT PLAN – LISTED HERITAGE PLACE  
HERITAGE ASSESSMENT – STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE  
HERITAGE ITEM NUMBER 608**

***MILL ISLAND AND SETTING – AVON RIVER BETWEEN  
HEREFORD-WORCESTER/71 HEREFORD STREET, 110  
CAMBRIDGE TERRACE, CHRISTCHURCH***



**PHOTOGRAPH: M.VAIR-PIOVA, 5/12/2014**

**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.*

Mill Island has historical significance for its association with early flour milling in Christchurch, (1859-88) and pioneer millers Daniel Inwood and W H Lane. Canterbury's potential as a grain-growing area had been recognized by the Deans Brothers from the earliest onset of colonisation in the 1840s, and Canterbury soon became the chief wheat-growing province of the colony. Daniel Inwood purchased the island in 1855, obtained authority from the Provincial Council to use the river for 30 years for the purpose of a flour mill in 1858, and in 1859 constructed a mill on the island and a dam and mill race nearby. The mill was known as 'Inwood's Mill' or the 'City Mill'. Inwood was required to maintain the Hereford Street Bridge

as part of the authority to make use of the river for his mill. W H Lane purchased the island and milling operation in 1862, and it became known as 'Lane's Mill.' From 1878-88 the mill was leased to other milling concerns, including Aulsebrook and Company (1883-1885). In 1888 when the original Inwood Mill ordinance expired, the mill machinery was removed but the buildings remained.

Mill Island has social significance not only for the role it played in the provision of employment and flour for the early colonists but for the role the mill building played once its milling operation ceased in the provision of housing for homeless men at the end of the long depression of the 1880s and early 1890s. From May 1894 to September 1895 the former mill was leased for use as a night shelter for the homeless called the Avon Refuge, which was run by Baptist Pastor William Birch. This aspect of the island's history of use reflects social concerns in the city at the time when there were more than 1,000 unemployed in the city. More than 500 men took shelter at the refuge in the first seven months, with over 50 in the shelter each night. In September 1895 the refuge transferred its headquarters to the Addington Prison buildings.

In 1897 Lane sold the island to the City Council, and the mill building was removed. The following year the Christchurch Beautifying Association (est. 1897) built a rock wall and heavily planted the island with trees, and by 1902 it was recorded as being well-regarded for its aesthetic qualities. This was the Association's first major undertaking. To celebrate its centennial year the Beautifying Association gifted the renovation of the island to the city in 1997. This included landscaping and a decorative water wheel to commemorate the past use of the island. The water wheel is not a replica of any structure previously on the site, however, and attracted some criticism at the time of its installation.

## **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.*

Mill Island has cultural significance as a tangible reminder of the needs of the early colonists with the establishment of a mill in the inner city where colonists first settled. It also has cultural significance as the first project of the newly-formed Christchurch Beautifying Society, and thus its demonstration of a cultural shift in the community's use and perception of the River Avon, from a place of work and industry to one of recreation and repose. The island also has commemorative value for its association with the centenary of the Christchurch Beautifying Society, which was marked by re-landscaping and the construction of a water wheel in 1997. The Governor General Sir Michael Hardie Boyes presided over the inauguration ceremony for the wheel, on 8 September 1997.

Mill Island also has cultural and spiritual significance for tangata whenua, in view of its location on Otakroa (River Avon), a mahinga kai for tangata whenua, and the recorded use of the island by Maori in the early 1850s as a camp during the whitebait season.

## **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 Island has aesthetic significance for its informal planting scheme, carried out from 1898, which gives it considerable visual amenity. Originally the Christchurch Beautifying Society had intended an all-native planting scheme in order to restore the island to its pre-settlement appearance. This proved impractical given the soil type, however, and a mixture of native and introduced species were planted, including magnolias, kowhai, maples, flowering cherries, roses and northern rata. The rata was still present on the island in 1999. The replica mill wheel is a more recent Christchurch Beautifying Society project. Views to the island from the Worcester Street and Hereford Street bridges enhance its aesthetic significance.

## **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.*

Mill Island may have technological and craftsmanship significance, in an ecological and landscaping context, for its planting and stone walling. Further research is needed, however, to clearly identify plant species that relate to the activities of the Christchurch Beautifying Society and to establish the extent still extant of the rock wall built by Society secretary Leonard Cockayne in 1898.

## **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.*

Mill Island, which is located on a stretch of the River Avon as it traverses the central city between Hereford and Worcester Streets, has contextual significance for its relationship with the River Avon, Rhododendron Island, and other river islands. The island also has contextual significance for its place within the city's milling heritage, which includes Wood's Mill in Addington. The island is also linked with Harrison's Flour Mill in Winchester, which was erected by Daniel Inwood after his departure from Christchurch in the early 1860s.

The island is now part of the landscape of the Avon River, which is valued for the recreational and visual amenity it provides in the central city, and has been planted in an informal, mixed-species manner.

## **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.*

Mill Island and its setting has 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.

## ASSESSMENT STATEMENT

Mill Island has overall significance to Christchurch, including Banks' Peninsula for its association with early flour milling in the colonial city, as a homeless shelter and for its Association with the Christchurch Beautifying Society. The island has historical and social significance for its association with Daniel Inwood who purchased the island in 1855, obtained authority from the Provincial Council to use the river for 30 years for the purpose of a flour mill in 1858, and in 1859 constructed a mill on the island and a dam and mill race nearby. It also has historical significance for its long association with the Christchurch Beautifying Society. Mill Island has cultural significance as a tangible reminder of the needs of the early colonists with the establishment of a mill in the inner city where colonists first settled. It also has cultural significance as the first project of the newly-formed Christchurch Beautifying Society and for its role and its role as a mahinga kai area, later industrial workplace and recreational amenity. Mill Island has aesthetic significance for its informal planting scheme, carried out from 1898, which gives it considerable visual amenity and it has contextual significance has contextual significance for its relationship with the River Avon, Rhododendron Island, and other river islands and the general landscaping amenity now established along the banks of the Otakaro/Avon River. It has archaeological significance for its location on the Otakaro/Avon River and in view of the recorded activities on the island from the early 1850s.

## REFERENCES:

WA Taylor *The Lore and History of the South Island Maori* (Christchurch, 1952)

Thelma Strongman *City Beautiful – the first 100 years of the Christchurch Beautifying Society* (Christchurch, 1999)

*The Press* 29 November 1930, p.15.

John Wilson et al *Christchurch Contextual Historical Overview* (for Christchurch City Council, June 2005)

**REPORT DATED: 28 NOVEMBER 2014**

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.

