



**DISTRICT PLAN – LISTED HERITAGE PLACE
HERITAGE ASSESSMENT – STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE
HERITAGE ITEM NUMBER 1324
*FORMER DWELLING AND SETTING, AVEBURY HOUSE –
9 EVELYN COUZINS AVENUE, CHRISTCHURCH***



PHOTOGRAPH: M.VAIR-PIOVA, 16/01/2015

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.

Avebury House has high historical and social significance as a substantial, early Richmond dwelling built c.1885 for the prominent Flesher family. The house relates to the wider historical landscape in that it is part of the early development of the Avonside and Richmond area. This area became popular due to its access to the river, and the proposed canal, which never eventuated. The property also has some historical significance due to its association with the original owner of the rural section Dr Gundry. William Flesher took a great interest in, and played an active part in public and church matters, particularly in the Richmond community. His son James Arthur Flesher was also actively involved in public life, and served on numerous municipal and local bodies (including from 1923 to 1925, Mayor of Christchurch) and was a member of a number of organisations concerned with the welfare of the community.

The transfer in 1951 of the property to the Mayor, Councillors, and Citizens of Christchurch for recreational purposes is of historical and social significance as it reflects a phase in town planning when there was a move towards providing for adequate numbers of recreation or

neighbourhood parks in residential areas. It also reflects the common occurrence in Christchurch whereby the Council purchased large homesteads with substantial grounds for recreation purposes. This typically occurred once the properties passed out of family ownership because the property extended beyond most modern families needs. The house is also of historical and social significance for its connection with the Youth Hostel Association; it functioned as the Cora Wilding Youth Hostel for 32 years.

In recent years Avebury House has been maintained as a community facility having been refurbished by the Council and run by a Charitable Trust. Avebury House sustained moderate damage in the 2010/2011 Christchurch earthquakes. Restoration work has included foundation repairs and sub-floor strengthening, repair and reinstatement of damaged interior walls and ceilings, and additional bracing. The chimneys also required rebuilding. The building is now earthquake strengthened to 100 percent of the New Building Standard (NBS). Avebury House re-opened in September 2013 and is again operational as a community facility.

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.

Avebury House has cultural significance because the house and setting reflects the way of life of a large, moderately wealthy, and socially and politically prominent family. The family retained ownership of the property from 1885 – 1945. This longevity of ownership is reflective of the cultural habit of property being retained through several generations in one family. It also reflects the nature of budget travellers accommodation in the 1960s – late 1990s. The house is of cultural significance on account of its present use as a Community centre, and as a landmark in the Richmond community consciousness.

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.

Avebury House has architectural and aesthetic significance as a rare surviving example of the work of little known Christchurch architect James Glanville. The house dates from c.1885, with alterations in c1907 resulting in its present design aesthetic. The house has undergone a number of alterations which have had some effect on its architectural integrity, namely the glazing of the first floor verandah.

Glanville's designs of note include the Richmond Methodist Church Sunday School (1886), two 2 storey houses in Gloucester Street/Latimer Square (1896) (demolished), a two storey residence on the corner of Papanui Road and Leinster Street (1899) – Leinster House (relocated). He was also responsible for a number of domestic buildings in and around Christchurch. The Latimer Square houses and Leinster House shared characteristics of the c1907 alterations to Avebury House and which were typical of Glanville's work, namely a corner turret and ground and first floor verandahs.

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.

Avebury House has technological and craftsmanship significance as a good representative example of this style of dwelling during the period in which it was built. Of note is the elegant stairway and balustrade, plaster cornices, ceiling roses, leadlight windows, hall archway and corbels, and timberwork throughout (doors, architraves, timber panelling).

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.

Avebury House and setting have high contextual significance as the house and setting are a landmark in the area, and their physical presence is a strong feature of Eveleyn Couzins Avenue. The setting and grounds of the house have been used as a public park in council ownership for 56 years. The first stretch of the Avenue was the former driveway to the house, and this is physically evident in the avenue of trees and wide footpath leading towards the house.

The large house and substantial grounds now in public/ community or educational use are a common feature which characterises Christchurch suburbs – other examples include Mona Vale, Abberley Park, Elmwood Park, Te Koraha and Strowan.

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.

Avebury House and setting has archaeological significance as an early cottage is believed to have been on site prior to 1885. The foundations of this cottage still remain, and in conjunction with the main part of the present house built in 1885, the house and property 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

Avebury House and setting have high overall significance to the Christchurch District. Avebury House has high historical and social significance due to its association with the early development of Richmond, and with pioneer Dr Gundry, the original owner of the land. It also has historical and social significance because of its connection to the Flesher family who had a prominent role in the local communities of Richmond, Avonside and New Brighton. The history of the house is connected with the youth hostel movement and functioned as the

Cora Wilding Youth Hostel for 32 years. In a wider historical context, the house and grounds illustrate the manner in which large houses and properties outgrow their suitability as family homes and are often gifted to or purchased by local governments or the Crown for community use. The house is of cultural significance on account of its present use as a community facility and its landmark status in the community consciousness. Architecturally the house is significant as a good example of the domestic architecture of local architect James Glanville. Glanville designed a number of buildings in Christchurch and Canterbury in the late 19th century and the first decade of the 20th century, few examples of which remain. Avebury House has technological and craftsmanship significance as a good representative example of this style of dwelling during the period in which it was built. Avebury House and setting has high contextual significance as the attractive setting of the house is notable in relation to the house on account of its expansive lawn areas, planted borders, and established trees. The setting and grounds of the house have been used as a public park in council ownership for 56 years. Avebury House and setting has archaeological significance due to the remnant foundations of the earlier cottage on site and the fact that the main part of Avebury House predates 1900.

REFERENCES:

Christchurch City Council Heritage files 9 Evelyn Couzins Avenue, Avebury House

REPORT DATED: 28 JANUARY 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.

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