

**DISTRICT PLAN – LISTED HERITAGE PLACE
HERITAGE ASSESSMENT – STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE
HERITAGE ITEM NUMBER 31
ABBERLEY PARK - 23 ABBERLEY CRESCENT,
CHRISTCHURCH**



PHOTOGRAPH: M.VAIR-PIOVA, 24/12/2014

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.

Abberley Park has social and historical significance for its association with a number of early Christchurch identities and Christchurch Reserves Department senior staff who redeveloped the grounds for use as a suburban park. In addition, the park illustrates contemporary town planning theory in its acquisition as a suburban park, provision of play facilities for children, and its response to the 1937 Physical Welfare and Recreation Act.

In 1863 businessman Thomas James Maling purchased 4.5 acres of land from George Gould and built his family residence Abberley, which he named after Abberley in Worcestershire. The Maling family returned to England in 1864 and leased the property until their return to New Zealand at the beginning of 1873. Five years later Abberley transferred to Frederick Delamain, an early settler and horse breeder who owned the home for five years. Following Delamain the property passed briefly to Edward Hatfield Brown of Mt

Thomas and Henry Samuel Brown before being variously leased and owned until 1905 when the last private owner, Alice Annie Kirk purchased the property. Alice, together with her husband John Hobbs Kirk, a retired wool merchant, added a ballroom and games room to the residence. Alice died in 1933 and John in 1938. One year after John's death the Trustees of the Alice Annie Kirk estate offered Abberley for sale to the city. At this time it was a ten-roomed dwelling with stables, a fowl house, garden sheds, a horse paddock, tennis court, rose garden, vegetable garden and extensive caged cherry orchid.

The property was purchased by the city in 1939 for £4250 as part of the Council's Centennial Observations Programme. As part of Abberley's conversion to a public park with an emphasis on children's play facilities, the residence was removed from the site except for part of the building which had formerly been used as a ballroom and games room. Additions were made to this structure and it was converted for use as a pavilion. Areas within the grounds were redesigned by Reserves Superintendent Morris Barnett including the formation of new paths, removal of outbuildings, additional planting and the grassing of the vegetable garden and orchard. Abberley Park was officially opened in February 1942.

In the mid-1950s, the park's proximity to the Institute of the Blind hostel, 'Fernwood', prompted Huia Gilpin, Director of Botanic Gardens, Parks and Reserves to lay out a scented garden for the Institute's residents. This opened in 1964 and was the forerunner of other scented gardens for the sight-impaired in Auckland and Wellington.

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.

Abberley Park has cultural significance for its role as a passive recreation area and its association with Christchurch's sight-impaired community. The park has a commemorative value by virtue of its purchase to mark the New Zealand Centennial.

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.

Abberley Park has architectural and aesthetic significance as an example of the conversion of an established private Victorian garden into a public park at the beginning of World War II. Consequently it combines garden aesthetics of both these periods. Many original elements of the garden's design and planting scheme, parts dating to the 1860s, were retained during the initial redevelopment in 1939-41, and survive today. The combination of open grassed areas, mature trees and plantings, St Albans Stream and the network of paths contribute to the particular character of this park. The park also has some architectural value for its community facility which dates from the early 20th century and is a remnant of the former Abberley residence, although a later addition to the original building. The building references the park's former role as a family home and its late 1930s modifications reflect its mid 20th century function as a park pavilion.

The park represents a number of garden styles and planting fashions including extant early plantings of predominantly exotic deciduous tree species; remnant garden bed systems and distinctive garden styles e.g. woodland, stream-edge, rose, shrubberies and evidence of the growing popularity and fashion for Australian species in the 1950s. Remnant elements of

Huia Gilpin's 'Garden for the Blind' reflect a considered use of materials and a modernist influence in the design and layout. The surviving portion of the Abberley residence, now known as the Abberley Park Hall, references the park's residential past and was the central feature around which the garden was organised.

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.

Abberley Park has technological and craftsmanship significance for the evidence it may contain relating to past landscape fabric and horticultural practices. As an early residential landscape with remnant plantings from the mid-19th century Abberley Park contains significant arboricultural evidence of historic plant availability and planting fashions.

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.

Abberley Park has contextual significance within St Albans and Merivale, as its scale and established appearance link it to the traditionally large, verdant gardens of this suburb. With residential intensification however, the park has largely become an historic remnant of this earlier pattern of suburban development. The park is one of a small number of neighbourhood parks which were originally designed as private gardens and continue to reflect aspects of their residential history. This can be seen in their planted and memorial fabric and remnant traces of dwelling imprints and circulation patterns. This is particularly true of the gardens around the remaining portion of the residence, now operating as the Abberley Park Hall, where vegetation and the form of garden beds survive from the property's days as a residence. The park relates to other suburban parks in Christchurch created from the grounds of former homes, such as Risingholme, Elmwood, Woodham, Beverley and Burnside Parks.

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.

Abberley Park is of archaeological significance for the potential to provide archaeological evidence of human activity, including that which pre dates 1900. The site functioned as a private residence and ornamental grounds from the early 1860s.

ASSESSMENT STATEMENT

Abberley Park is of overall significance to Christchurch, including Banks Peninsula. It has historical and social significance as the site of an early colonial home and for its association with the Maling family who established the grounds, the Kirk family who further developed

the Abberley landscape and senior Reserves staff who directed the early design of the park and its features. The transformation of the garden into a park in the years that followed reflects the town planning theories of the period regarding the distribution of green space in residential areas. Abberley Park has cultural significance for its genesis as a 1940 New Zealand Centennial project and its subsequent role as a passive recreation area, especially for Christchurch's sight-impaired community and local children. The park has architectural and aesthetic significance as an established private Victorian garden reworked as a public park at the beginning of WWII and the Abberley Park community facility has architectural value as a remnant of the former Abberley residence modified for mid-20th park use. Abberley Park has technological and craftsmanship significance for the evidence it may contain relating to past landscape and horticultural practices. The park has contextual significance as a suburban park within the context of St Albans and Merivale. The park has archaeological significance as the former site of a pre-1900 dwelling.

REFERENCES:

CCC heritage files, Abberley Park

Clearing Sale of Furniture: Abberley, *Lyttelton Times*, 29 November 1864, p 7

Louise Beaumont, *Abberley Park Historical Investigation and Assessment*, (Christchurch, August 2010)

http://chchkete.peoplesnetworknz.info/streets_and_places/topics/show/15-abberley-park

St Albans: from swamp to suburbs: an informal history (Christchurch, 1989)

<http://www.ccc.govt.nz/cityleisure/communityservices/facilitiesforhire/abberleyparkhall.aspx>

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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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