

**DISTRICT PLAN – LISTED HERITAGE PLACE  
HERITAGE ASSESSMENT – STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE  
HERITAGE ITEM NUMBER 508  
*DWELLING AND SETTING – 61A TENNYSON STREET,  
CHRISTCHURCH***



**PHOTOGRAPH: M.VAIR-PIOVA, 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.*

The former Camelot Settlement workers' dwelling at 61A Tennyson Street has historical and social significance as it was built under the terms of the Liberal Governments Workers' Dwellings Act of 1905, a scheme established to provide low-cost, good quality houses. The working class suburb of Sydenham was chosen as one city site for development under the Act; another was in Mandeville Street not far from the Addington Railway Workshops. Thirty-five sections were subdivided in Sydenham creating Longfellow and Seddon Street. Thirteen houses were built initially, the first of which were designed by well-known local architects Samuel Hurst Seager, Cecil Wood, the England Brothers and Fred Barlow. The government of the day wanted architectural variety, rather than uniformity, in domestic design. Despite the intentions of the scheme it was not very successful. The houses that were built passed

fairly quickly into private ownership as the Reform Government privatised the workers' dwellings and used the 1906 State Advances Act to encourage home ownership over rental housing.

This was the case with 61A Tennyson Street, which was purchased by Thomas William Tomlinson, carpenter, in 1926. Tomlinson married Rhoda Morgan in 1905 and lived at the property from 1908. The couple had three children, although one died as an infant. The Tomlinsons retained ownership of the property until Rhoda's death in 1952, Thomas having died a year earlier. Since that time the property has been owned by a clerk, a machine moulder and a nurse. These professions are representative of the occupations of the people who were typical tenants when the scheme was established. The dwelling sustained substantial damage in the 2010/2011 Canterbury earthquakes and awaits permanent repairs.

## **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 workers' dwelling has cultural significance for its association with the foundation of New Zealand's social welfare system and the policies and practices of Seddon's Liberal Government, which earned New Zealand the reputation as being the 'social laboratory of the world'. Workers' dwellings, female suffrage, old age pensions, labour arbitration and land tenure reform were all part of the modernisation of the state by 'King Dick' Seddon's government as the country moved towards Dominion status in 1907. The Workers' Dwellings Act instituted a building programme that was to become the precursor of the State Housing scheme of the first Labour Government in the 1930s.

## **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 dwelling has architectural and aesthetic significance as it was designed in 1906 by local architect Frederick Barlow in line with the stipulations set down under the Workers' Dwellings Act of 1905. When the Workers Dwellings' Act was passed the government sponsored a competition to encourage established architects to design workers' homes. The government considered the aesthetics of the houses important and wanted to avoid strict uniformity in the designs for the dwellings. Barlow, who had trained with A W Simpson, was also responsible for the Machinery Hall at the International Exhibition of 1905-06. In keeping with the Act, he designed a five-roomed house including a bathroom and a scullery. The single-storey brick villa has a hipped roof with a jettied cross gable over the front bay. An arched entrance porch shelters the central entrance and, like the casement and fanlight type fenestration, indicates the emerging influence of the California bungalow on New Zealand housing. Only about a quarter of the original houses were built in brick, as it was a more expensive material than timber. Alterations have been made to the house with a sun porch to the eastern elevation and the removal of the chimneys.

## **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 former Camelot Settlement workers' dwelling has technological and craftsmanship significance for the potential it has to demonstrate its construction methodologies, materials, fixtures and fittings, and its brick construction and cement detailing. Leaded fanlights are also notable craft features of the dwelling.

## **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 dwelling at 61A Tennyson Street and its setting have contextual significance as one of the Tennyson Street houses in the Camelot Settlement. The house has a group relationship with other surviving Camelot Settlement dwellings, including 52 Longfellow Street, designed by Seager and Wood, which is also listed. The house has landmark significance in the area due to its materials, design and visibility from the street. The setting of the dwelling consists of the listed building within a garden setting. The original section has been subdivided and a garage erected on the street frontage of the property.

## **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 dwelling and its setting have archaeological significance because of the potential to provide archaeological evidence relating to human activity on the site, including that which occurred prior to 1900.

## **ASSESSMENT STATEMENT**

The former Camelot Settlement workers' dwelling at 61A Tennyson Street and its setting has overall significance to Christchurch, including Banks Peninsula. It has historical and social significance as a dwelling built under the auspices of the Workers' Dwellings Act 1905 and its long association with the Tomlinson family. The dwelling has cultural significance as it demonstrates the social democratic policies and practices of the Liberal Government. It has architectural and aesthetic significance for its bay villa design by architect Fred Barlow. The former Camelot Settlement workers' dwelling has technological and craftsmanship significance for the potential it has demonstrate its construction methodologies, materials, fixtures and fittings, and its brick construction and cement detailing. The dwelling and its

setting has contextual significance as a local landmark and in relation to the workers' dwelling at 52 Longfellow Street, as well as other such dwellings in the Camelot Settlement and elsewhere in Christchurch. The dwelling and its setting have archaeological significance because of the potential to provide archaeological evidence relating to human activity on the site, including that which occurred prior to 1900.

#### REFERENCES:

Christchurch City Council Heritage files *61A Tennyson Street, Former Workers' Dwelling*  
Barbara Fill 'Homes for the People: Workers' Dwellings of Christchurch' *Historic Places in New Zealand* (1987)

John Wilson et al *Contextual Historical Overview of Christchurch City* (Christchurch 2005)

<http://resources.ccc.govt.nz/files/ChristchurchCityContextualHistoryOverviewFull-docs.pdf>

WORKERS' DWELLINGS ACT: YEARLY STATEMENT BY THE RIGHT HON. THE MINISTER OF LABOUR *Appendix to the Journals of the House of Representatives* 1914 Session I, H-11b <http://atojs.natlib.govt.nz>

<http://my.christchurchcitylibraries.com/state-housing/>

**REPORT DATED: 3 MARCH, 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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