

**DISTRICT PLAN – LISTED HERITAGE PLACE
HERITAGE ASSESSMENT – STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE
HERITAGE ITEM NUMBER 593
*DWELLING AND SETTING, FIFIELD – 14 HAWFORD ROAD,
CHRISTCHURCH***



PHOTOGRAPH: A. MARRIOTT, 2012

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 dwelling Fifield has historical and social significance for its connection with William Bray (1812-85), a civil engineer, farmer and early Christchurch identity, and pharmacist William Townend and his family. From the 1860s Opawa was the site of a number of large-scale suburban residences among them 'Hawford' the 1860 home of Dr John Willis that gave the roadway its name. Prominent city men who resided at rural properties in Opawa in the mid-19th century included engineer Andrew Anderson, journalist William Reeves, and lawyer Frederick Wilding. In 1878 William Bray bought a retirement property in Opawa: 15 acres divided into five fields, hence the pun name Fifield. The Bray family were able to move into their new dwelling Fifield by mid-1880. Bray had trained as an engineer, but also turned his hand to farming after he arrived in Canterbury in 1851 and developed the Avonhead estate, amongst other properties. Although considered something of an eccentric and seldom seen

in his later years, Bray played a leading role in the early development of Canterbury province, being involved with the construction of the railways, the Moorhouse Tunnel and the port of Lyttelton.

Following the death of Bray and his wife Harriet, Fifield was sold to William and Rosa Townend in 1890. Townend was a pharmacist and accoucheur (male midwife) who also assisted his brother Dr Joseph Townend in his medical practice. At first the property was let out, with the bookseller George Whitcombe of Whitcombe and Tombs living at Fifield in 1893, but by the mid-1890s the Townends had taken up residence. A contemporary plan suggests the Brays had established a formal garden in front of the dwelling during their time there, and Townend was also a keen gardener and horticulturalist, growing plants to supply ingredients for his remedies at Fifield.

The property was eventually inherited by William and Rosa Townend's daughter Olive and her husband Reginald Vincent, who returned to live at the property in 1925, and then in turn by their daughter Lynette and her husband Keith Adams. It is still owned by Adams descendants.

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 dwelling Fifield has cultural significance because it illustrates the way of life of early Christchurch settlers who developed large-scale residences in Christchurch's early suburbs. The building and outbuildings provide evidence of cultural habits of the time and much of its original layout (such as a nursery, smoking room, and servants' quarters) is still intact, while evidence of its small-scale farming operations is preserved in the form of its remaining outbuildings. It also evidences the cultural habit of generational ownership of larger properties and has a 125-year association with the Townend family and their descendants.

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 Fifield has architectural and aesthetic significance as a two-storey mid-Victorian square plan hipped-roof villa. Exterior ornamentation is restricted largely to the concave return veranda, which wraps around two sides of the house, and is carried on timber posts with simple curved brackets. Windows are of the sash type and those on the first floor overlooking the garden have shutters. The veranda shelters two bay windows and is partially enclosed at either end. The architect has not been identified. As a result of the 2010-2011 earthquakes, there was considerable damage to dwelling's chimneys (which partially collapsed and were subsequently removed) and plasterwork.

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 dwelling Fifield has technological and craftsmanship significance as a large Victorian house, with the potential to demonstrate the construction techniques and materials that were in use in the mid-19th century. The dwelling is generally a conventional timber structure with a slate roof. Some of the features and details include sliding folding shutters on the exterior, full brick nogging and a cantilevered balcony. There are two marble fire surrounds as well as an attic and cellar.

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 Fifield has high contextual significance as a large 19th century Opawa residence with a substantial portion of its original setting still intact. The north-facing dwelling is located at the southern end of a large section of 1.36 hectares. Behind the dwelling there are a group of outbuildings, including a stable block and cow byre, which are associated with the past running of the property as a small farm, and to the front and to the west of the dwelling is an extensive area of lawns and large mature trees. The current property also retains much of its original northern boundary along Jackson's Creek, and its original road access off Hawford Road. Although the dwelling is not readily visible from the street, the long drive lined with mature trees has landmark significance. The grounds of the property are entirely surrounded by post-World War II suburban residential development.

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 Fifield and its setting have archaeological significance because of the potential to provide archaeological evidence relating to past construction methods and materials, and human activity on the site, especially gardening, including that which occurred before 1900. There has been a house on the site since at least 1880.

ASSESSMENT STATEMENT

The dwelling Fifield and its setting has overall significance to Christchurch, including Banks Peninsula. It has historical and social significance for its association with engineer William Bray, and pharmacist William Townend and his descendants, who have lived in the house for 120 years. The dwelling has cultural significance as a reflection of the way of life of the Bray and Townend families. It also evidences the cultural habit of generational ownership of larger properties and has a 125-year association with the Townend family and their descendants. The dwelling has architectural significance as a mid-Victorian square plan villa. It has

technological and craftsmanship significance for its brick nogging, sliding shutters and interior features including marble fire surrounds. The dwelling Fifield has high contextual significance as a large 19th century residence in Opawa, one that retains a very generous garden setting and two historic outbuildings. The dwelling has archaeological significance in view of its age and the colonial development of the locale since the 1860s.

REFERENCES:

CCC Heritage File 14 *Hawford Rd.*

Lyttelton Times 1 June 1885.

MacDonald Dictionary of Canterbury Biography B694 *William Bray*.

Noel Gillespie *Opawa: the outpost on the banks of the Heathcote* (Christchurch, 2007)

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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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