

# A Conservation Management Plan for the Awa-iti Domain Memorial Gates, Little River.

June 2005

## Introduction

### *Definition of study area*

The focus of this report is the stone memorial gate structure adjacent to the Christchurch/Akaroa highway. Included is the remaining early fencing at both ends of the memorial. The 1923 memorial is however also in close proximity to the 1913 Coronation Library built as a memorial to WW1, and the 1930 memorial plaque to Thomas Quealy and the memorial sundial to Thomas Buchanan (1861 – 1916). These heritage items form a quartet unique to the Little River Domain.



Memorial gates viewed from domain

The Library requires some basic maintenance to prolong its life and should have its own conservation management plan. The sundial's pillar has separated from its base and requires immediate repair to avoid further damage or theft.

### *Methodology*

The "Policies" and "Guidelines" part of this report relate to the priority restoration work now required to rehabilitate the monument. The preceding history research and "Assessment of cultural significance" serve to underline the monument's historical importance to the community as an example of national monuments commemorating wars involving New Zealanders. Stating the monument's significance should be used to ensure that ongoing works to the monument will be prioritised accordingly.



Nearby Buchanan sundial

The author has visited the site several times to better understand its condition, and has sought out local knowledge about the memorial, and has researched the history of the site in order to 'bring it to life' and inform conservation policy guidelines.



Quealy ground plaque

Conservation policy guidelines have been worked out in conjunction with craftsmen Stonemasons skilled in working with the construction and stone types in evidence.

The form of this report has been completed with reference to James Semple Kerr's 'The Sixth Edition Conservation Plan' published by the National Trust of Australia, and "A Suggested Table of Contents For a Conservation Management Plan endorsed by the NSW

Heritage Council', and Christchurch City Councils 'Conservation Plans' heritage information brochure #8.

### **Author details**

Dave Margetts is a Heritage Consultant with a degree in Architecture (Auckland 1976), is a Canterbury Branch Committee member of the NZ Historic Places, is an affiliate member of ICOMOS NZ and a member of the NZ Institute of Architects.  
(See Appendices for contact details).

*Conservation terms are as defined in the 'ICOMOS NZ Charter for the Conservation of Places of Cultural Heritage Value', and conservation concepts as discussed in 'ISCARSAH' guidelines published by ICOMOS.*

### **Acknowledgements**

- Banks Peninsula District Council for commissioning this report, providing contact names, site plan and Awa-iti Domain Draft Management Plan.
- Early photographs and reminiscences generously provided by:  
  
B&J McKay, Spreydon, Christchurch, former Little River residents.  
Sally Brown, Darfield, former Little River resident.
- Original Architect plans and specification: Thelma Leggat, Curator of Architectural Drawings at the Macmillan Brown Library, University of Canterbury.
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- Historic Places Trust peer review by Jim Espie, Conservation Architect, Southern Regional Office.

## **History**

### **National theme**

The Awa-iti Domain memorial gates were completed prior to Anzac day 1923 to commemorate those local soldiers who died in WWI and the South African War, and later WW2. Loyalty to the British Empire was a virtue and national honour worth defending. The First World War had left 18,500 New Zealander's dead and more than 50,000 wounded. For the first time in our young nation's history the tragic cost of shared sacrifice made a profound impact.

The potential for prosperity from surrounding farmland realised prior to and after 1900, was progressively eroded by the depression, Second World War, droughts, railway closure in 1954 and 1980's government and local body restructuring. This affected the Little River township and district, with businesses and services leaving.

Recent increases in tourism and a holiday property boom are now boosting the economic fortunes of the district. A deeper appreciation of heritage nationally and on the Peninsula, has increased a willingness to conserve and appreciate the local European settler history.

Prior to WW1 the Government had provided funding linked to design guidelines, but this thinking was out of favour by the time these gates were built with local funding. Only after WW2 did the Government link funding to memorials built as useful community facilities.

*Ref: 'The Sorrow and the Pride', P69*

### **Local history**

By the turn of the century, Little River had disposed of most of its surrounding native timber and the district settled down to dairying, sheep farming and the cutting of cocksfoot for seed. By the 1920's Little River had matured into a fully functioning township which boasted several halls, church, maternity hospital, post office and provisioning stores. Little River was the gateway to the Peninsula and here the train was met by the coaches taking travelers on to Akaroa and several boarding houses coped with tourists.

*Ref: 'Banks Peninsula, Cradle of Canterbury', Little River chapters.*

The Awa-iti Domain was gazetted in 1892, and it was used as the venue for the Little River show. Control of the domain was appointed to the Domains Board in 1918 and it became a recreational reserve after 1980. The Awa-iti Reserve Board was dissolved in 1983 and administration transferred over to the Wairewa County Council becoming a local purpose (community buildings) reserve. In 1989 the Wairewa County Council purchased the sale yards from Wrightsons and the Reserve Management Committee has informal control over this Council-owned freehold property, anticipating that it will be amalgamated eventually with the Awa-iti Domain.

Boundary trees were planted in 1910, and the cricket pitch and tennis courts were laid down prior to 1925. In 1965 the Little River Hall was destroyed by fire, and in 1984 a new community complex opened on the Port Levy Road side of the Domain.

The Domain currently hosts the A&P show and gains income from grazing leases and several one-off events. Also a range of sporting activities occur here for adult and school teams. Camping is limited to pre-arranged groups and some Christchurch businesses hold their end-of-year social events at the Domain.

### **Architect**

Collins and Harman  
Contract signed 21<sup>st</sup> December 1922  
Contract value £838-00  
Contractor Rennell Bros

Client: Wairewa County Council  
 Memorial opened Anzac day April 25<sup>th</sup> 1923  
 WW2 memorial engraved stones added c1948

Collins and Harman were a well known Christchurch architectural practice operating between 1917 and 1940. Partners JJ Collins and RD Harman also designed the Little River Hospital. In the early days of the practice, site inspections to Little River took 3 days riding in a pony and trap.

*Ref: 'A Century of Architecture'.*

## Heritage Value

### ***Assessment of cultural significance***

The gates are listed in the Banks Peninsula District Plan as having:

Historical Significance – “The building, object or area has a strong association with significant people or events, or is important as a reflection of social patterns of its time” and

Landmark Significance – “The building, object or area makes an important contribution to the identity of the town, neighbourhood, street, or road in which it is sited by virtue of its situation, silhouette, bulk, colour or texture”.

These assessments are valid, but need explanation and expansion as outlined in the table below.

(Significance categories scale: none, little, some, considerable, exceptional)

Significance category (Using BPC classifications)	Comment	Significance
Historical	Refer to the 'Local History' text above. The gates were built in 1923 in a range of peninsula stone types, and feature two engraved memorial slabs facing the main highway commemorating names lost in the Boer War of 1899-1902, and WW1. The memorial's appearance was altered to incorporate WW2 losses with the addition of two engraved name slabs facing the Domain and a new engraved stone band above, and unveiled 8 <sup>th</sup> August 1948.	Considerable

Architectural	The Architect practice of Collins and Harman designed many notable buildings in Canterbury. This monument forms a sound example adding to the range of memorials to WW1 being built throughout New Zealand at that time. The gates are of a simple classical style and are a combination of being useful and ornamental built within a likely budget constraint, and as such presents no unique stylistic or functional features.	Some
Group	The memorial gates and Coronation Library, memorial plaque and sundial form a group of differing structures and objects installed in the early 20 <sup>th</sup> Century. Their unity and uniqueness as a group is compelling as they were all built as memorials either to major wars or to individuals and are within close proximity to each other.	Considerable
Landmark	Visible from, and in close proximity to the main Christchurch/Akaroa highway, the gates form a landmark that many Cantabrians can recall.  The setting of the memorial gates provides the most obvious entry point to the Domain. Mature boundary plantings partly obscure the views of the gates from surrounding residential and farm properties.	Considerable
Archaeological and scientific	The site prior to European occupation was predominantly a bush landscape supporting Maori settlement in the vicinity. Intensive human activity on this site (as defined by "study area" above) has not (yet) been recorded prior to 1900.	'Little' (Subject to further research).

The Banks Peninsula Council's current heritage attributes of "Historical" and "Landmark" could now incorporate the "Group" category 3 to better explain the gate's heritage value in conjunction with the other adjacent memorials.

Also, the BPC categories could be expanded to include a "Social" and "Craftsmanship" category to fully account for the use of the site

for spiritual and community use, and to attribute value to the craftsmanship evident in the construction of all 4 items. The contribution of the "Social" category to the gate's and site's value would be considerable based on the local history (see above) and current use for Anzac commemorations. The craftsmanship evidenced in the stone monuments (while commonplace in its day), is today only replicated with some cost and great skill by a small number of practitioners and the gates should have some value attributed for the manner of original construction.

### ***Statement of significance***

The Awa-iti Domain memorial gate's considerable cultural significance and heritage value are evidenced by the Little River community's strong spiritual connection to the site by actively commemorating previous inhabitants' lives there. A visible landmark, the gates are part of a group of heritage items that provide the local community and visitors with tangible links to the district's pioneer settler past.

## **Physical Condition**

### ***Materials and techniques***

Based on the Architect's drawings and specification, the memorial has been constructed on a concrete foundation cast around five horizontal railway irons. The stone/rock facings have been in-filled with concrete and rubble. The mortar recipe for setting the stones was a one part lime to four of sand mixed with one part of cement. The pointing mix is not specified, but should be analysed and confirmed before repair work proceeds.

Several stone types are in evidence. The main building stone appears to be a Port Hills trachyte, with Lyttelton trachyte and Port Hills red "tuff" bands. The arches appear to be Charteris Bay trachyte.

The four engraved granite slabs have been fixed back to a concrete face with steel dowels. The engraved Timaru bluestone facings were cut in above the arch commemorating WW2.

The iron gates feature wrought details, riveted where necessary. The gates are held with a top hinge set into the stonework and a brass pivot pin onto a metal base plate set in concrete. The gates have latch sets and are embellished with small bronze crests.

## ***Current condition***

### **Stonework:**

There has been some slight subsidence of the structure, evidenced by out of vertical alignment. There has been some stone movement but no obvious major cracks.

Generally the stone surfaces are in reasonable condition.

Stones not in good condition include:

- Several Lyttleton trachyte stones have a delaminated surface.
- Many of the Port Hills "tuff" string course stones have decayed

There is much calcite encrustation under the main arch as a result of leaching of the lime mortar. This is probably not a major concern as damage would probably occur to the stone if it were to be removed.

Some pointing is falling off, the likely cause being the mortar components of cement and lime reacting. There are calcite encrustations at the base of the granite name slabs as a result of this reaction.

Cracks in the mortar capping and pointing are allowing excess rainwater to enter the structure along the top of the structure, evidenced by water leaking out further down many days later after rain. The structure is therefore holding a considerable amount of water and this additional weight will be stressing the stone arches.

### **Previous stonework repairs:**

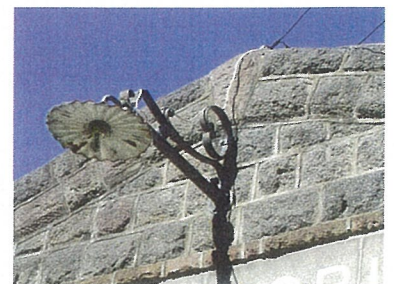
Previous attempts to repair stonework defects includes the loose application of grout to external faces of stones as a tidy-up measure, re-pointing with incorrect profile and possibly incorrect mix, continuation of plastered cappings over onto damaged "tuff" stonework strings and an inappropriate repair to a granite slab bruise.

### **Engraved lettering:**

There are different styles and finishes of lettering to the granite slabs and Timaru bluestone, including gold and silver leaf work and white paint. The gold leaf on the two slabs facing the road is exfoliating and has largely disappeared. The silver leaf on the two slabs facing the Domain and opening plaque has also partially disappeared. The large bluestone letters were originally painted white.

### **Light fixtures:**

Metal support and fixings into the stonework are showing rust.



*The two lights were installed prior to the 1948 unveiling and are iconic fittings of their time.*

### **Iron gates:**

Generally in sound condition with good paintwork. The meeting stiles of the pair of gates have been bent. When made, the gates relied on wrought iron assembly techniques without welding. Some repair welding has compromised the original construction, and this welding has in some junction locations, assisted in the retention of water and rusting is evident.

One gate has the original pivot pin removed and a makeshift support installed into the stonework, possibly to raise the opened gate over a raised concrete path built much later than gate installation. Gate latch hardware has parts missing on all gates and is not functional.

*The concrete path was installed after WW2. Prior to this there was a cattle stop so that the gate could be left open.*

### **Fence:**

The early timber rail, post and mesh fence either side of the gates is in poor repair. Timber rails and posts are decaying or missing and the fence is out of shape.

*Early pre- WW2 photographs show the fence continuing in front of the Library. There was a picket gate entry at the road boundary and an azalea plot adjacent to the right end (viewed from road) of the memorial.*

### **Paving:**

The main short entry drive is metalled with evidence of asphalt patches underneath, and much grass cover. The concrete path from the south west gate to the Library is in reasonable condition, but the far gate entry is grass covered.

## **Conservation Policy Guidelines**

### ***Vision***

This conservation management plan provides a statement of significance (see above) and provides detail (see below) on achieving a restored memorial for locals and visitors to continue using. This will be achieved by retaining and enhancing the maximum significance by preserving the memorial's integrity as a landmark. Restoring stonework, engraved names and texts and improving gate functioning will achieve this. Appropriate interpretation of the gate (and other memorials in close proximity) will help deepen visitors' experience of the site.

The main threats to the gates continued survival and well-being would occur after conservation repair, if ongoing inspection and maintenance were not carried out, damage occurred by vandalism, works carried out on the gates or its site were inconsistent with its significance, or if damage occurred through domain use.



## **General policies**

1. Securing the heritage status of items.

Application should be made to the Historic Places Trust to register the gates and nearby items to better ensure long term appropriate protection and assist with future fundraising. (The BPC 2005 Awa-iti Domain Draft Management Plan incorrectly lists the memorial as registered with the Historic Places Trust).

Adjust the BPC District Plan to reflect a larger range of significance categories now attributable to the gates. (See Assessment of Cultural Significance above).
2. Future development.

Re the objective stated in the Draft Management Plan, Clause 4.3: "Development of this corner of the Reserve must be sympathetic to the heritage values of the memorial gate". Any development should also consider the other nearby heritage items as one site. If future development is to occur here, it must have the guidance of a heritage professional in the early planning stages.
3. Access management.

Currently the central pair of gates are on occasion tied together to prevent vehicle access. The insertion of a lockable bolt (see "Restore iron gates" below) should assist with an access control policy.
4. Restoration work to stone.

Future work to the memorial and other stone items must be carried out to restore the physical capacity and appearance of the masonry to exclude water, using traditional techniques assisted by current conservation methods and consistent professional advice.

No new attachments to the stone are permitted without seeking such advice.
5. Ongoing maintenance.

A heritage professional be employed every five years to inspect and report on any maintenance or restoration work required.
6. Interpretation requirement.

The corner site of the Domain, because of its historical interest and importance to the Little River community requires some interpretation signage for visitors to link the four heritage items and give a "taster" of the history. This could be in a format prescribed by the Draft Management Plan, and could take the form of text and image on an angled plinth supported off the ground inside and near to the gates (but not attached to the gates).

## Restoration guidelines and scope

1. Keep the rain water out.

Currently rain water ingress is probably overstressing the structure of the gates (see "Current condition" above). The plastered capping along the top of the stonework and to the topside of the protruding strings is cracked and damaged, allowing water entry. A new plastered cap will also be prone to cracking. Flashing the top of the memorial over new plaster would provide long-term protection.

The existing plaster on narrow stone strings needs to be raked out and redone, providing adequate slope to shed water quickly. Loose pointing and mortar to stonework generally, needs to be raked out and redone, noting that research on appropriate mortar and pointing mixes will need to be carried out before work begins.

7. Keep the groundwater away.

The ground levels from the road catchment slope down to the base of the memorial. This water may be contributing the memorial's subsidence. This could be alleviated by installing a mole drain placed parallel and near to the memorial under the shingle to drain to soakage areas well away from the memorial.

8. Restore granite slabs and engraving.

Remove all gold and silver leaf work, clean engraving and replace with new leaf. Remove calcite encrustation or residue at slab edges, and re-colour bruise on slab facing Domain and top edge of two slabs showing discolouration. Polish granite slabs.

9. Repair Stonework.

(See 2 above for re-pointing). Horizontal "tuff" string course decayed stones to be refaced with new stone facings secured with stainless pins. It may be possible to 'reverse' original stones to expose new face. The trachyte string course stones with delaminated faces to have faces re-fixed with structural adhesive.

Remove previous infill plaster and pointing stone repairs.

10. Clean stonework.

The whole structure requires an application of biocide to kill moss spores and other growths, followed by steam cleaning using the low pressure steam method.

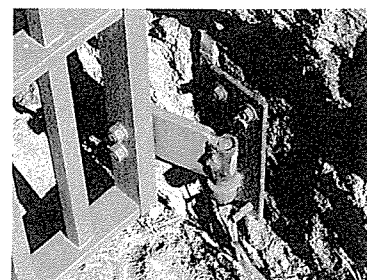
11. Restore iron gates.

South west gate missing pin to be reinstated and existing non-original fixing removed and stonework made good. Any subsequent conflict of gate with path height to be remedied by reforming concrete path.

De-scale all localized rust locations and treat.



Spalling tuff string course & poor plaster repair



Improvised gate hinge replacing original pin.

Straighten two bent meeting stiles.  
Replace missing latch mechanism pieces and return to full function. Reinstall a locking central bottom tower bolt.  
Remove paint from small bronze crests and leave to form patina.  
Paint repairs to match existing grey finish and grease hinges.

12. Restore light fixtures.

Remove from stonework and remove rust and paint coatings. Refinish and re-fix with stainless bolts into stonework. Adapt and conceal electrical supply cable and underground supply cable from library. Consider replacing energy saver bulbs for a light source that directs light onto stonework only.

13. Tidy pedestrian and vehicle surfaces.

Remove grass from under arches and around base of memorial and level sub-base if necessary, applying a new layer of stone chip without raising ground levels adjacent to the memorial.

14. Repair fence.

The angled fence segments either side of the memorial are an early design and are a significant feature within the memorial's curtilage, and should be retained with the design replicated where damaged or missing. The remaining profiled post could be reused set in a new footing with galvanized fixing, and replicated on the other side. The retained angled fence segments would then join with any new fencing on the Domain east boundary as proposed in the Draft Management Plan.



Original timber post and fence

### ***Implementation***

The above guidelines are an outline only based on initial assessments of building fabric. Before any work proceeds, a small team of appropriate specialist craftsmen will need to be selected and their work coordinated.

The memorial will need to be fully scaffolded to complete cleaning and stonework repairs.

The highest priority work warranting the earliest attention is the restoration of the stone structure of the memorial to prevent further water ingress.

## Appendices

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Refer to attached Awa-iti Domain plan.

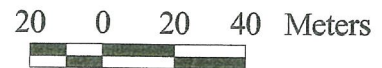
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**Awa-iti Domain - Little River**



1:2000

Map printed 24/5/2005



This plan has been compiled from information supplied to Council. The Council accepts no liability for the completeness or accuracy of information contained in this document.  
WARNING: The position and depth of services must be verified by hand digging to avoid damage by mechanical excavators.