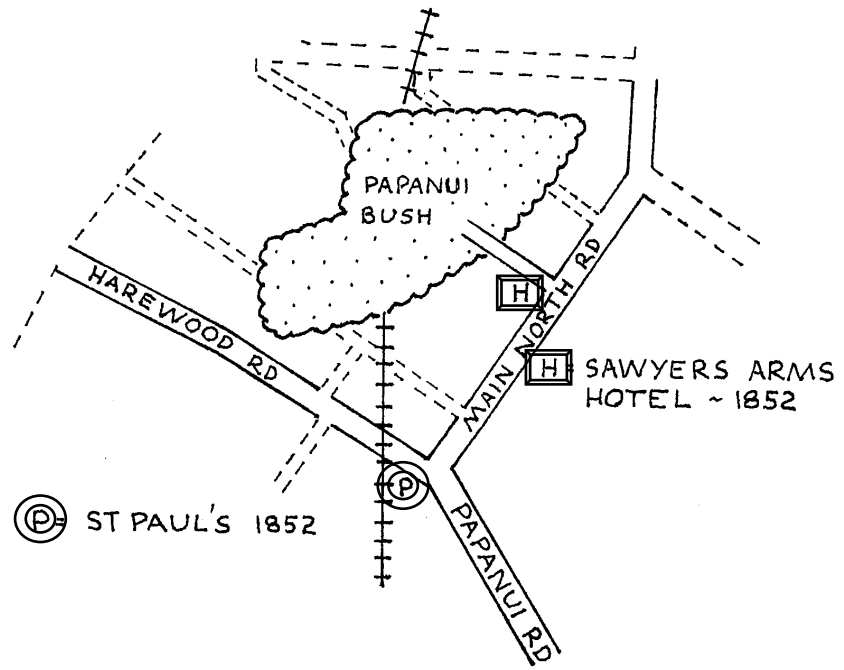


**THE  
PAPANUI  
BUSH**

KANUKA

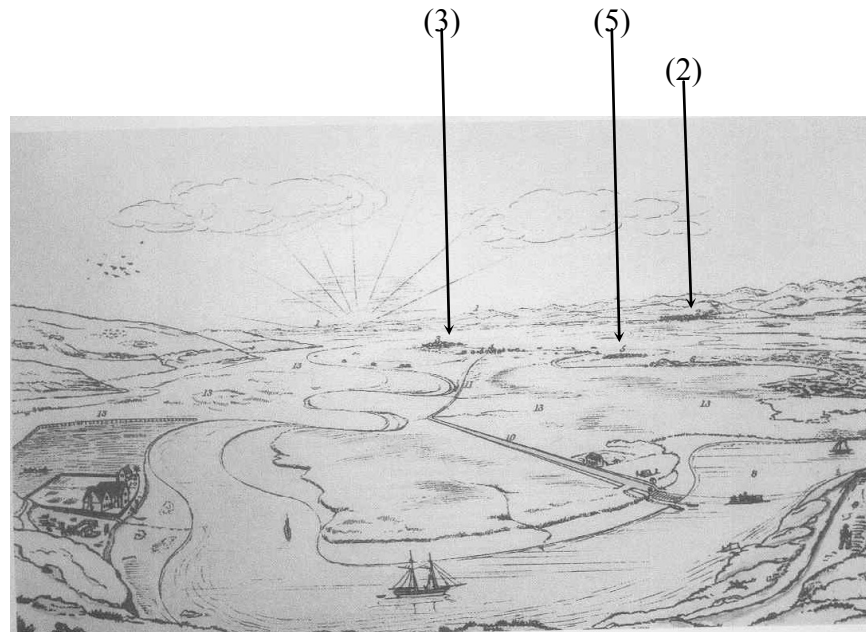




MAP—showing the location of Papanui Bush  
in relation to St Paul's.

## PAPANUI BUSH.

The settlement of Christchurch started in 1850 with the arrival of the first four ships of the Canterbury Association. These early settlers trekked up over the Bridle Path from Lyttelton, and on reaching the top they saw the plains stretching for miles to the Southern Alps. The only bush to be seen was at Riccarton, where the Deans family had settled, (3), Papanui, bush (5), and Harewood Forest at Oxford, (2).



*This sketch, a view from St. Andrews Hill,  
was drawn by William Holmes in 1851.*

Picture sourced from "Christchurch Changing—an Illustrated History" by Geoffrey Rice

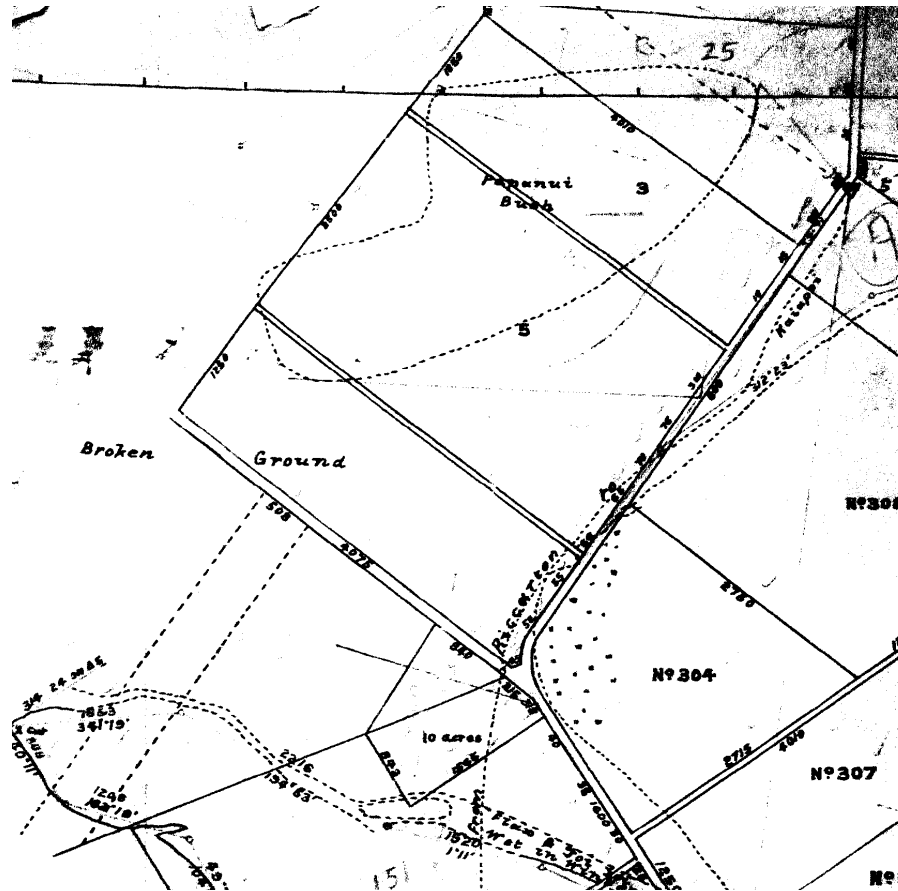
The Bush was significant well before the settlers saw its advantages. The name 'Papanui' is considered to mean 'a platform in a tree from which birds are snared (or spared)' referring to the Maori food-catching technique. There does not appear to have been any permanent Maori settlement here but the bush was on the west of their well established track to the pa at Kaiapohia (Kaiapoi). The bush was a fruitful source for 'kai' (food).

In the early days of European settlement "the land fairly swarmed with native quail that were then so plentiful that a traveller or settler could shoot as many as he wished to."

The extent of the bush is generally given as seventy acres, although some have said as many as ninety acres. It covered an area from where the Papanui High School now stands to just beyond Vagues Road. Accounts record totara, rimu (red pine), kahikatea (white pine), matai (black pine) and kanuka all growing there.

Just a few months after the first Canterbury Association colonists arrived in December 1850, a land ballot was held, and the Rural Section (RS) number on land documents indicates the order of choice. Letters of application for land were used for the ballot. Rural sections were usually 50 or 100 acres, and this entitled people to a town or Lyttelton section as well.

Miss Anne Bowen was the third person to have their ballot drawn, and she chose 50 acres consisting of a large portion of the Papanui bush. This is recorded as RS3.



*Our thanks to "Land Information N.Z.  
for allowing us to photograph this original "Black Map"  
of the Papanui area.  
This map was drawn by the Chief Surveyor, Thomas Cass  
in March, 1856*

Anne Bowen, born in 1806, County Mayo, Ireland, came to New Zealand on the “Charlotte Jane”. She was the sister of Charles Bowen who was the secretary to John Robert Godley.

From Dr. Barker’s hut she took on the development of Sunday Schools and was described as ‘the famous Sunday School teacher.’ After Mrs. Emma Barker’s death, Anne devoted herself to caring for Dr. Barker’s children.

Anne died in September 1875 having probably never lived at her Papanui property.



Miss Anne Bowen, taken in Dr. Barker’s garden about 1870.  
*(Picture from the Canterbury Museum Collection)*

William Guise Brittan was fifth in the land ballot and he chose 100 acres (RS5) next to Miss Bowen.

William was born in Gloucester, England, in 1809. He was a trained doctor and when he, his wife Louisa, and their four children sailed for New Zealand on the Sir George Seymour the ship's surgeon superintendent proved unsatisfactory so William took over most of the surgeon's duties.

On arrival in Canterbury Godley appointed William to take charge of the Land Office and supervise the allotment of the sections. In 1854 he was the Commissioner of Crown Lands of Canterbury, and in 1856 a Resident Magistrate.

He also spent time on the South Heathcote Road Board and was a partner in Halswell Station. In later years he was a licensed lay-reader at St. Paul's church Papanui, taking services there and at Sunnyside Lunatic Asylum.

William made a gift of the timber for the first St. Paul's Church. William, Louisa, and several members of their family are buried at St. Paul's. William died in June 1876 and Louisa in 1901.



William Guise Brittan. Photo credit: Canterbury Museum (ref 19XX.2.950)

By 1853 the sawyers' village of Papanui was growing, and already had a hotel, store, blacksmith, clothing store, chemist, and plans for a school and Mechanic's Institute. In 1857 the population of Christchurch's first country community was two-thirds of that of Christchurch.

RS3 and RS5 were let out for tree-felling in small lots. The timber was being pit-sawn for building materials including shingles for roofs and much of it for fire wood, remembering that a fire was needed for all cooking and it was the only means of heating the buildings.

It was a hazardous undertaking getting the timber from Papanui into Christchurch. "Only an expert bullock driver would attempt to cart timber from the bush to Christchurch going both there and back in one day."





The ground between Papanui and Christchurch was very swampy and caused a lot of problems. Papanui Road started out as a rough, muddy track in which bullock wagons were frequently stuck. There was a specially boggy trap about where the Blighs Road intersection is today. Papanui Road was not adequately paved until 1857, when the bush had been almost cut out.

“The last tree of the Papanui Bush, a totara, stood for some years after its fellows were gone.” By all accounts the bush was all cut out after about five years. It is now memorialised by a planting in the Papanui Domain, in Sawyers Arms Road, on the east side of the railway line.

The Domain is thought to have been set up about 1890 as a recreation area for the local people. It consisted of 6 acres, 2 roods, 25 perches. The Domain Board let the land for sheep grazing to keep them solvent. “Early requests for use of the Domain on Sundays were rigorously refused.” Sport was NOT to be played on Sundays. In 1946 “It was reported that football was being played on the domain on Sundays by unauthorised teams. Mr Mahar and Mr Robinson were given power to carry out investigation and take whatever action they deemed necessary to prevent organised games being played on Sundays.”

Many sporting groups used the grounds and often large events were held there, including athletics and cycling. At one stage there was a clay cycle track at the grounds.

The Waimairi Rugby League Club, later known as Papanui Rugby League Club used the grounds as their headquarters. About 1972 the Papanui Domain Board handed

*The following is an extract from the "New Zealand Tablet"  
Volume XVIII, Issue 13, 25 July 1890, page 29  
and discovered on line at PAPERSPAST  
<http://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz>*

## **THE BUSH ONCE AT PAPANUI**

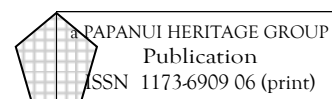
There was formerly a fair amount of native forest at Papanui. But this forest the first settlers on the plains soon cut down. When was this bush planted? how long did it flourish, and what events did it witness? Where are now the various birds that sang therein? Where too, are the Maoris who camped beneath its shade? As the sun forever dispels a morning's mist, so has a little time removed forest birds and Maoris. Silence also has fled, for now a town and fields are where the forest stood. To persons who wended over the hills and plains, this wood and that at Riccarton were once most famous land marks. Wild unbroken winds with a mournful sound then swept the brown tussock-grass-covered plain,—But in the early days, on a fine morning in summer, I recollect passing over the thinly-settled plains to the bush. As is usual with native forests, on the outskirts of the bush were a number of cabbage trees, which, when seen from a distance and with the forest in the back-ground, have a pretty effect. Mokamokoes are fond of building their nests on the tops of those trees outside a bush. Large and stately black pines, manukas and other trees abounded. The fuchsias were densely loaded with their small, black, pear-shaped berries, in many of which I noticed was a small hole drilled by the birds to extract the honey. Supplejacks made some parts nearly impenetrable, and the dense foliage overhead rendered other places quite sombre. The black mouldy ground was almost void of grass and a perfect network of roots. The bush abounded with birds and each fine morning witnessed a great concert. Then thousands sang at the same time and produced a sweet and varied harmony. There were the rich mellow notes of the tui and the mokamoko. Besides these and other birds there were in numbers the bluish wild pigeons and branch-breaking cuckoo, also the owl or moepok. In the bush was a one compartment whare made of slabs placed with the bark outside. The roof was

thatched with sheets of bark. At one end was a chimney also made of slabs, but to protect the wood from the fire the chimney was lined inside with a thick wall of tempered clay and small stones. Besides a door, the whare could boast of two windows, all of which were in front. Against one wall inside was a series of bunks, one above another. At night and on stormy days a large fire—fuel being cheap in the bush—continually burned. Dardis and Wilson, two bushmen, at that time the whare occupants, there made and cooked damper. This kind of bread was made in two ways. Flour, mixed with a little salt and a due quantity of water, was kneaded into a stiff dough, and rolled into a flat cake about two inches thick, and buried for about two hours in a heap of wood red-hot ashes. The damper was then withdrawn and scraped. A better way was to put the dough between two pieces of zinc, and place the whole on a highly-heated flat stone on the ground. In the upper sheet of zinc a little hole was made to allow steam to escape, and the ashes surrounding and heaped on the dough were placed so as not to close that aperture. While I was in the bush a dray with a team of twelve bullocks left the forest with a large load of firewood for a person in town. Dardis accompanied the team and returned to the bush in the evening.....

*There then follow fifty lines of Dardis's account to Wilson of the farewell to Godley in Hagley Park; including Godley's speech.*

.....“Should you want more news, you must wait till the *Times* arrives, and in the meantime don't want to make of me a newspaper.” We then retired to rest. Until the birds began to sing in the morning, no noise was heard save the screeching of mopokes. For a few hours it was intensely dark in the bush, but the large fire, which burned nearly all night, afforded a fair amount of light in the whare. F. M.

*Compiled by Christine Grant,  
and edited by Warren Hudson  
November, 2008*



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