

DISTRICT PLAN – LISTED HERITAGE PLACE
HERITAGE ASSESSMENT – STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE
***POPLAR CRESCENT – 230, 2/230, 272, 283 CAMBRIDGE
TERRACE, 295F MADRAS STREET, 211, 267 OXFORD
TERRACE, CHRISTCHURCH***

Sixty years of beautification measures in the stretch of the Avon River between Colombo and Madras Streets culminated in 1928-1929 with the ambitious **Poplar Crescent** scheme, a collection of civic amenities in a designed setting. This was the vision of businessman and philanthropist Thomas Edmonds, who wished to commemorate his fifty years in New Zealand with an appropriate gesture.

Thomas John Edmonds (1858-1932) was a prominent and successful Christchurch businessman in the early twentieth century. His company became known across New Zealand for producing the famous Edmonds' Baking Powder. The company's rising sun motif, 'Sure to Rise' motto, branded cookbook and Linwood factory with its award-winning garden were instantly familiar to most New Zealanders. Edmonds was an enlightened employer and public-minded. Towards the end of his life he donated large sums of money for various civic improvement projects. The Poplar Crescent scheme is however the only one of his major contributions to the city to remain substantially intact.

At the centre of Edmonds' proposal were the twin lines of **Poplars** that flanked the Avon between Manchester and Madras Streets. Thomas had been born in Poplar in London, so the redevelopment of this area of central Christchurch had an additional level of meaning. Poplars had been first planted along this part of the Avon in the early colonial period, and therefore represent the continuity of efforts to create an ideal landscape through what came to be known as 'beautification'.

Edmonds' scheme added two significant built elements to the existing landscape, representing two distinct threads of the interwar design discourse. At the western end of the avenue of poplars was the prominent **Edmonds Band Rotunda**, a copper-domed cream-plastered Renaissance fantasy embedded in its own miniature classical landscape of gravel walks, balustrades and pavilion. The rotunda remains partly deconstructed as a consequence of damage sustained in the Canterbury Earthquakes of 2010-2011. At the eastern end of the avenue are the neighbouring **Edmonds Clock Tower and Telephone Kiosk**, more informal Free-style compositions in limestone and volcanic rubble representing the Arts and Crafts tradition.

**DISTRICT PLAN – LISTED HERITAGE PLACE
HERITAGE ASSESSMENT – STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE
HERITAGE ITEM NUMBER 79**

***EDMONDS BAND ROTUNDA AREA AND SETTING (INCLUDING
ROTUNDA, SHELTER, BALUSTRADES, LANDING AND LAMP
STANDARDS) - 230, 2/230, 272, 283 CAMBRIDGE TERRACE,
295F MADRAS STREET, 211, 267 OXFORD TERRACE,
CHRISTCHURCH***



PHOTOGRAPH: M.VAIR-PIOVA, 05/01/2015

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 Edmonds Band Rotunda Area has high historical and social significance for its association with prominent businessman and philanthropist Thomas Edmonds and with nineteenth and early twentieth century efforts at ‘beautification’ of the central city.

Thomas Edmonds was a prominent and successful Christchurch businessman in the first half of the twentieth century. His company became known across New Zealand for producing the famous Edmonds Baking Powder. The company’s rising sun motif, ‘Sure to Rise’ motto, branded cookbook and Linwood factory with its award-winning garden were instantly familiar to most New Zealanders. Edmonds was an enlightened employer and civic minded. In the interwar period, towards the end of his career, he donated large sums for various civic improvement projects. These included the Radiant Hall (later known as the Repertory

Theatre), the Theosophical Society Hall and the Poplar Crescent beautification scheme. The Poplar Crescent scheme is the only one of his contributions to the city to remain fully extant.

The area of Avon River bank between Colombo and Madras Streets was planted with poplars and willows from the 1870s. Samuel Delabere Barker (1848-1901), a founding member of the Christchurch Beautifying Society in 1897, was instrumental in this beautification project and later planted a native garden as well. After his death, the section of Cambridge Terrace between Manchester and Madras Streets was renamed Barker Avenue for a period.

In 1928 to commemorate fifty years in Christchurch, Thomas Edmonds offered to finance a scheme of riverbank improvement in the same area, to be called Poplar Crescent. The key feature of the scheme was a band rotunda and associated landscape beside Cambridge Terrace next to the Manchester Street Bridge. The Edmonds Band Rotunda was completed in 1929 and employed as a venue for musical performance for many years. In 1986 it was enclosed and converted into a restaurant. The rotunda and its associated structures were badly damaged in the 2011 Canterbury Earthquakes, and the rotunda was subsequently largely deconstructed. The dome remains secured on site and it is intended that the rotunda will be reconstructed.

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 Edmonds Band Rotunda Heritage Area has high cultural significance for the association of the area with the tangata whenua, as part of a concerted effort in the early twentieth century to beautify the city centre, as part of a flush of philanthropic activity in the interwar period, and as a venue for public music performance.

The Ōtākaro (Avon River) was highly regarded as a mahinga kai by Waitaha, Ngāti Māmoē and Ngāi Tahu. Ōtākaro, meaning "the place of a game or play", is named for the children who played on the river's banks as food was gathered. Although the Waitaha pā of Puaari was located nearby, most people were seasonal visitors, and few would have lived in the Ōtākaro area itself. Those that did were known to Māori living outside the region as Ō Roto Repo (swamp dwellers).

In the late nineteenth century, leading citizens became concerned with the appearance of the central city. An early initiative was the foundation of the Christchurch Beautifying Society in 1897 to coordinate beautification projects. Concerted effort continued in the period between the wars, assisted by a burst of philanthropy from leading businessmen such as Robert McDougall, Henry Bowker, Matthew Barnett and Thomas Edmonds – who financed several public buildings in addition to his riverbank improvement scheme. Outdoor public performance by brass bands was a very popular activity in the first half of the twentieth century, and there were band stands/rotundas in many public parks across the city and on the foreshores at Sumner and New Brighton. Today however there are few band rotundas remaining in the city, and none currently in use.

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 Edmonds Band Rotunda Area has high architectural and aesthetic significance as an example of interwar classicism by Christchurch architect Victor Hean. The rotunda is one of the more ornate band stands in New Zealand.

Victor Hean (1901-1979) was born and educated in Christchurch, completing his training in 1927. After a period spent working for contractor P. Graham and Son and architect H. St. A. Murray as a draughtsman, Hean joined the City Council as a draughtsman in the City Engineers Office, rising to the position of Assistant City Architect. While at the CCC he designed many bridges and libraries as well as working on major projects such as the MED Building and the Women's Rest Rooms in Cathedral Square. In 1936 he left Christchurch to become architect for the Palmerston North Hospital Board. Hean joined the Government Architect's Office in 1942 and retired in the position of Ministry of Works Assistant District Architect in Christchurch in 1966.

Hean chose an ornate Renaissance classical 'temple' style for the Edmonds Rotunda in its riverside setting, crowning it with a striking faceted copper dome. The style was carried through the landscape treatment of the surrounding area, including the extensive balustrading, although the shelter and lamp standards adopt a stripped classicism more typical of the period. The rotunda may be compared with the Bandsmen Memorial Rotunda in the Botanic Gardens, a refined Doric composition designed by Luttrell Brothers and completed in 1926.

The Edmonds Rotunda was altered to become a restaurant in 1986. This required the enclosure of the formerly open structure with glazing, the insertion of services and a kitchen in the basement, and the attachment of large external canopies.

The Rotunda Area suffered serious damage in the 2011 Canterbury Earthquakes. The dome rotated on its columns and was at risk of collapse before being lifted off. The riverside balustrade slumped in places. The site is presently cordoned. Repair and replication is intended.

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 Edmonds Band Rotunda Area has technological and craftsmanship significance for the extensive and decorative use of reinforced concrete. There is also notable metal work in the lamp standards and screens.

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 Edmonds Band Rotunda Area has high contextual significance on its site and in relation to the remainder of the Poplar Crescent beautification scheme area. The item and setting boundary are contiguous with the immediate land parcel, a large triangular area confined between the Avon River, Manchester Street Bridge and Cambridge Terrace. The item

contains the band rotunda itself, the Poplar Crescent shelter and a comprehensive landscape treatment which includes extensive terracing and associated walls, steps, balustrades, lamp standards and a landing place. The Edmonds Band Rotunda Area is located within the Poplar Crescent heritage place, comprising the area of riverbank between Colombo and Madras Streets subject to Thomas Edmonds' Poplar Crescent development in 1928-1929. This also includes the poplar trees, lamp standards, 'Barker Avenue' native garden and the clock tower and telephone booth on Madras Street. Although the Rotunda has been largely deconstructed, the Rotunda area remains a landmark.

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 Edmonds Band Rotunda Area and its setting are of archaeological significance because they have the potential to provide archaeological evidence relating to past building construction methods and materials, and human activity on the site, including that which occurred prior to 1900.

ASSESSMENT STATEMENT

The Edmonds Band Rotunda Heritage Place is of high heritage significance to the Christchurch district including Banks Peninsula. The Area has high historical and social significance for its association with prominent businessman and philanthropist Thomas Edmonds and with late nineteenth and early twentieth century efforts at beautification of the central city. The Area has high cultural significance for its association with city beautification, and its former role as a public musical performance space. It is one of few band stands remaining in the city. The Area has high architectural and aesthetic significance as an example of interwar classicism by Christchurch architect Victor Hean. It is one of the most impressive band stands ever built in New Zealand. The Area has technological and craftsmanship significance for the extensive and decorative use of reinforced concrete. There is also notable metal work in the lamp standards and screens. The Area has high contextual significance on its site, in its immediate designed landscape, and in relation to the remainder of the Poplar Crescent beautification scheme area. It is a city landmark. The Edmonds Band Rotunda Area and its setting are of archaeological significance because they have the potential to provide archaeological evidence relating to past building construction methods and materials, and human activity on the site, including that which occurred prior to 1900.

REFERENCES:

CCC Heritage File: 230 Cambridge Terrace (Edmonds Band Rotunda)

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