

**DISTRICT PLAN – LISTED HERITAGE PLACE  
HERITAGE ASSESSMENT – STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE  
HERITAGE ITEM NUMBER 27  
*FORMER DWELLING AND SETTING, MIDDLETON – 30 ACACIA  
AVENUE, 74 MIDDLETON ROAD, 47A ARTHUR STREET,  
CHRISTCHURCH***



**PHOTOGRAPH: M.VAIR-PIOVA, 20/01/2015**

**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 former Middleton Homestead has high historical and social significance as once home of two of the city's early settlers: Thomas Rowley, who gave the estate its name, and Sir Charles Bowen and as a significant building within the Middleton Grange School complex.

Rowley arrived in Canterbury in 1853 and is believed to have built the first stage of the house in c.1854. He was a runholder, politician and active supporter of the Anglican Church in Christchurch before he returned England in 1864.

Sir Charles Christopher Bowen (1830-1917) arrived in Canterbury with his parents aboard the *Charlotte Jane* in December 1850. Thereafter he became secretary to Canterbury Agent, John Godley. Bowen later filled a number of political and civil service positions at both provincial and central government level, including Minister of Justice and Speaker of the Legislative Council. He was knighted in 1910 and retired four years later from the post of Speaker of the Legislative Council. In the same year he was made KCMG.

Whilst he was travelling overseas Bowen married Georgina Markham in England in 1861. The couple returned to New Zealand early in the following year and set up home at *Middleton*. Georgina Bowen was the sister of the explorer Clements Markham and the Bowens' daughter Gertrude was married to Robert Scott, a cousin of polar explorer Robert Falcon Scott. Thanks to these family connections the Antarctic explorers Scott, Ernest Shackleton and Edward Wilson were guests of the Bowens at *Middleton*. Charles Bowen had a particular interest in education, and whilst in government he introduced the 1877 Education Act, which established free, compulsory education in New Zealand. Sir Charles died at his home *Middleton*, survived by his wife and six of their seven children. According to his *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography* entry, Bowen 'was not a key political figure, but he played a significant part in the making of nineteenth century New Zealand society' (*Te Ara*, see below).

Middleton Grange School, an interdenominational Christian school, opened on this site in February 1964. It became an integrated special character school in 1996. The school caters for both primary and secondary school pupils and the former homestead is used in part to accommodate the Primary Library on the ground floor. The building received minor damage in the 2010/11 Canterbury earthquakes and has since been repaired.

### **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 Middleton homestead has high cultural and spiritual significance for its association with Middleton Grange School and education in this city since 1964. It reflects the cultural societal habit of the later use of large homes and sites by private educational institutes in Christchurch such as St Andrew's, St Margret's and Rangi Ruru schools, with these dwellings and their history providing a focal point for the school. The house and its setting has some additional cultural significance as a tangible reminder with the culture and way of life of early Christchurch settlers who developed estates in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in outlying areas of the new settlement.

### **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 former Middleton homestead has architectural and aesthetic significance as a mid-19<sup>th</sup> century Gothic Revival house, with its asymmetrical plan, jettied half-timbered gables, dormer windows and bell-cast roof. Part of the dwelling is cob construction and the remainder is timber construction with the entire building is rendered in stucco. It has been suggested that the original portion of the dwelling dating from c1854 may have been designed by either Benjamin Mountfort or Robert Speechley, but its designer is currently unknown. Although the house was altered and extended on a number of occasions, most notably in 1875 and 1930, each of these additions has been sympathetic to the original design.

### **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 *Middleton* homestead is of technological and craftsmanship significance for what it can reveal of nineteenth century building construction particularly the sections remaining in cob. While craftsmanship detail is apparent externally it has limited craftsmanship detail internally due to changes overtime to accommodate the school use in particular the recent refurbishment and alteration to accommodate a library. The building is one of a small collection of cob constructed dwellings, that remain in Christchurch. Apart from the similarly scaled and contemporary Englefield Lodge (c.1855/56), other dwellings of its type are to be found on the western periphery of the city, including Chokebore Lodge and Tiptree Cottage.

### **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 former *Middleton* homestead has contextual significance for its setting which to some extent reflects the fact that it was once located on a large site. It is now a landmark within the school grounds. A large group of mature trees remain around the house. The unbuilt areas of the school grounds reflect the land which was once associated with the house.

### **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 former *Middleton* homestead has archaeological significance because it has 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 former *Middleton* homestead has overall significance to Christchurch, including Banks Peninsula. The former dwelling has historical and social significance as the former home of early settlers Thomas Rowley and Sir Charles Bowen and their families. The house has cultural and spiritual significance as a key feature within the grounds of *Middleton Grange* School since 1964 and as a tangible reminder with the culture and way of life of early Christchurch settlers who developed estates in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in outlying areas of the new settlement. The house has architectural and aesthetic significance for its picturesque Gothic Revival styling and technological and craftsmanship significance as a rare surviving example of a nineteenth century home built partly from cob. The former *Middleton* homestead has archaeological significance because it has 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:**

Christchurch City Council Heritage Files – 30 Acacia Avenue

'Obituary of Sir Charles Bowen' *The Press* 13 December 1917, p. 7.

Biography of Sir Charles Bowen *Te Ara The Encyclopedia of New Zealand*  
<http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/1b26/bowen-charles-christopher>

**REPORT DATED: 14 NOVEMBER 2014**

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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