

3.3 The Armstrongs - John Armstrong 1867-1889 Joseph Armstrong 1873-1889

John Armstrong was appointed to the position of Government Gardener on August 15, 1867,¹⁵⁹ following Enoch Barker's move into self employment. Like Barker, Armstrong was responsible for supplying the city's public reserves with tree stock as well as progressing the development of Hagley Park and the Domain. Armstrong's work as Government Gardener was initially overseen by the Superintendent's Commissioners. However, from 1872, the administration of the Domain and Hagley Park was vested in the Christchurch Park and Domains Board and Armstrong's title became that of Head Gardener. This Board both directed specific landscape works, and granted permission for him (and subsequent Head Gardeners) to carry out their own initiatives.

Armstrong was well-versed in the art of private estate management, and had particular skills in plantation management and an interest in New Zealand botany.¹⁶⁰ He and his son owned many of the seminal landscape, arboricultural and botanical texts of the day, and appear to have drawn on many Victorian-era conventions outlined in these texts during their development of the Domain. This was particularly the case with the Pine Mound,¹⁶¹ the formation of the Pinetum, the botanical organisation of the New Zealand Arboretum and the layout of the path network.

3.3.1 The Domain

For most of his tenure as Government/Head Gardener, John Armstrong was assisted by his son Joseph who was responsible for the nursery. From Joseph's accounts, father and son were working to a designed layout or master plan for the Domain, and had reserved areas within the grounds for most of the features and elements common to Botanic Gardens of the period. While some of these were realised (the Pine Mound in 1871, Pinetum in 1874, Arboretum ca.1875), others were never established because of financial constraints and what they described as "*the passive opposition of the Domains Board.*" This was particularly the case with a class-ground¹⁶² and Rosarium they had planned for the Archery Lawn area, a shallow lake for aquatic plants that they had earmarked for an area to the west of the propagating house and a bog garden that was planned for an area near Barker's eyot.¹⁶³

An early account of the Domain published in October 1871 provides a description of the layout and planting of the landscape prior to the introduction of many of the Armstrong's significant features and Joseph's employment.

The main gate-way is of iron, comprising in itself two gates, and is fifteen feet in width, forming an imposing entrance; it is made by Mr John Anderson, and is a very creditable piece of workmanship. The posts are let into large blocks of stone, and thus extra solidity is secured.

On entering these gates, there appears a single broad pathway for the space of a few yards,

¹⁵⁹ *Journal of the Canterbury Agricultural and Pastoral Association*, Vol. VI, 3rd Series, 1918, p. 25

¹⁶⁰ Godley, E. (1999) Biographical Notes (33): John Francis Armstrong (1820-1902) and Joseph Beattie Armstrong (1850-1926), *New Zealand Botanical Society Newsletter*, Number 55, March, pp. 23-29

¹⁶¹ Popularised by J. C. Loudon as both a way of enlarging the impact of a park and a way of showing specimens to their best advantage in some isolation from other species

¹⁶² Systematic arrangement illustrating the classification of plants according to the natural orders of botany

¹⁶³ J. B. Armstrong's letter published in *The Press*, 25 September 1897, p. 5

where it branches off into three directions. On each side is a shrubbery, about thirty feet in width, running along the entire frontage to Antigua Street, and at the two points where the roads diverge are two magnificent cypresses, the gift of Father Chataigner [first resident Catholic priest in Canterbury], which at once attract the attention. Following the fine broad pathway to the left, the belt of shrubbery before mentioned is seen to great advantage, having a line of elms, oaks, pinasters, and American planes, as well as laurestinas, laurels, arborvitae, cypresses, philadelphias, lilacs (in full bloom), rose trees, deutzias, and many other varieties. On reaching the river-side by the wicket gate, may be noticed a triangular piece of ground (with an immense pinus insignis in its midst), measuring about 150 yards each-way...

Passing a few yards up the river the middle pathway is regained, and this runs entirely round the domain.... At points of the river where the grounds would be exposed to the winds is a fine growth of pinasters, which affords an admirable shelter...

Among the numberless curiosities presented is an unknown specimen of the gum tree, in full bloom, and with branches to the very foot, and about forty feet high. The *Wellingtonia Gigantea* is also admirably represented. Nor can the visitor fail to be struck with the noted mistletoe, growing as a veritable parasite, with the roots exposed, or the top-heavy appearance of the ribbon-wood, with its upper leaves three times the size of the lower ones or the splendid specimen of the alder tree presented several years ago by Mr Harman, or the respectable proportions of the English oaks, or the famous monkey puzzle, or the remarkable alpine varieties indigenous to New Zealand or a spruce which made two distinct growths last season... or the hundreds of costly foreign shrubs and trees (the pronunciation of whose names would tend to dislocate any ordinary jaw-bone unaccustomed to the operation) and all of them in a healthy and vigorous condition...

The centre of the grounds consists of two paddocks, in one of which are a number of deer and specimens of the wallaby tribe feeding among the high tussocks. There is also a piece of land about a quarter of an acre in extent set apart for the experimental cultivation of the New Zealand flax; there are at present eleven varieties from the North Island, and two native, and all are doing remarkably well... At one point is a mound covered with very large pinasters, affording excellent shelter. These were transplanted from Cathedral square, when the curve in the roadway was formed...

Considerable attention is being paid to the culture of the native veronica; as many as thirty specimens being already obtained, and some are in bloom, looking very beautiful. Borders are formed of this plant, and with great success. By the sides of the intersecting pathways are wide grass borders, diversified here and there by beds or choice shrubs and trees in more or less isolated positions; those planted by the Duke of Edinburgh and by the Governor being objects of special interest...

Just outside the nursery a portion of the waste land is to be set apart for a play-ground for children. This will be a necessary precaution, and will prevent boys and girls from damaging the borders and beds, as at present is often the case... After having traversed the grounds, the last objects that strike the eye are the Museum, and two raised mounds filled with choice shrubs and trees, which, though only planted four years, are perfect marvels of rapid growth; one specimen of the veronica alone being only a sprig when sown, and now measuring some 12ft across over all...¹⁶⁴

¹⁶⁴ 'The Government Domain', *The Press*, 23 October 1871, p. 3

Three years later, with Joseph Armstrong's assistance, the Acclimatisation Society's deer and wallaby enclosure was displaced by the Pinetum. This was one of the Armstrong's most impressive additions to the Domain, and its formation was closely monitored by journalists of the day. Reporting on the early stages of the Pinetum's planting in 1874, *The Star* described its design and noted that the eleven acres set aside for its cultivation were to be divided into five sections and planted on a geographical plan, with one section being devoted to each part of the globe [1. Europe and Africa, 2. Asia, 3. Canada and the United States, 4. California, 5. Australia, New Zealand and South America].

*The trees will comprise most of the rare pines, cypresses, junipers, thuja, &c, and they are to be planted sixty feet apart. Mr Armstrong has one hundred and sixty different species to commence with, and men are now engaged digging the pits - for their reception....An immense number of heather, Scotch roses, and English blackberry plants have been grown in the Domain, and these will be planted to form an undergrowth. There will be five separate walks across the pinetum intersecting each other in the centre, and each of these walks will start from a point on the boundary line, on which four, and in some cases five of the present walks converge. By this means the public can scarcely miss the pinetum which could not be made more conveniently accessible than by the plan Mr Armstrong has adopted.*¹⁶⁵

Within each section, trees were placed “according to size in preference to strict geographical order” and by 1875, Armstrong's amassed collection of 150 species and varieties had been planted.¹⁶⁶ This included some of Barker's conifers, which had been transplanted into the Pinetum from the River Walk, and at least two other pines that were extant.¹⁶⁷ Ironically, one year after the Pinetum had been planted, a number of rare imported pines were damaged and others destroyed by a deer that had been ousted from its former home.¹⁶⁸

Like his father, Joseph had a particular interest in New Zealand flora, and together the Armstrongs reportedly spent much of their own money and time resourcing the New Zealand Garden in the Domain.¹⁶⁹ This garden was located on the site of Barker's nursery in the general area of today's Herb Garden, and was referred to by them as an “arboretum of New Zealand trees and shrubs”. Praised by many distinguished botanists,¹⁷⁰ and later described by Leonard Cockayne as containing the very finest collection of New Zealand plants in the world, plants were arranged according to their natural order, following Sir Joseph Hooker's system of plant classification.¹⁷¹ It contained at least 700 different species representative of a wide range of natural habitats and included a collection of 28 species of celmisia. An extant deciduous *Plagianthus sp.* and two ageing *Sophora microphylla* may be remnant plantings from this garden.¹⁷²

The walk leading to this garden from the bridge linking the Acclimatisation Society and the Domain was planted on both sides with native veronicas,¹⁷³ showcasing the large collection that the

¹⁶⁵ *The Star*, 23 May 1874, p. 2

¹⁶⁶ J. F. Armstrong's report to the Domains Board, Minutes, February 1875, pp. 83-84, CH 343/133a, CCCA

¹⁶⁷ William Wilson recorded two plantings in the Domain near the deer enclosure prior to 1865

¹⁶⁸ *Otago Witness*, 26 July 1875, p. 17

¹⁶⁹ *The Star*, 9 December 1873, p. 2; *The Star*, 12 October 1889, p. 4; *The Press*, 25 September 1897

¹⁷⁰ Professor Goodall (Harvard), Dr Berggren (Sweden), Karl Ritter von Goebel (Munich), Dr Ernst Pritzel (Berlin), Dr Starr-Jordan (Stanford University), Dr Ludwig Diels (Director-General, Botanical Museum in Berlin-Dahlem) Messrs Sinnott and Eames (Harvard)

¹⁷¹ 'Native Plants in Christchurch: The Section in the Gardens - A Chat with its Founder', *The Lyttelton Times*, 9 June 1911, p. 11

¹⁷² Adam (2008) *Historic Landscape Report on the Potts Lawn and surrounding land*, p. 29

¹⁷³ *The Star*, 23 May 1874, p. 2

Armstrongs had gathered during their various botanising expeditions.

By 1873 a new nursery had been established on the west of the Domain, on the site of the present-day Children's Playground¹⁷⁴(figure 3.14). The establishment of this was necessary because the roots of the Blue gums which had been planted by Barker to surround his nursery, had spread over a considerable distance and were reportedly robbing the nursery soil of all its nourishment to the detriment of propagated stock.¹⁷⁵ The Armstrong's new nursery was approximately four acres in extent, and was enclosed with a thorn fence and divided into twelve compartments by holly and native pittosporum hedging. Other development work associated with this new area included a considerable amount of additional planting in what was described as the rough ground near the new nursery. Planting here included: *Wellingtonia gigantea*, *Sequoia sempervirens*, *Cupressus macrocarpa*, *C. goveniana*, *C. excelsa*, *C. plumosa* (now known as *Cupressus pisifera* var. *plumosa*), *C. squarrosa*, and others, *Thujopsis dolobrata*, *T. laetevirens*, *Thuja intermedia*, *T. tatarica*, and others; *Pinus radiata*, *P. lambertiana*, *P. macrocarpa*, *P. ponderosa*, *P. Benthamiana*, *P. gerardiana*, *P. tuberculata*, *P. Douglasii*, *P. firma*, *P. excelsa*, *P. mertensiana*, and other new and rare conifers.¹⁷⁶

The Armstrongs greatly increased the number of plant species and collections within the Domain, both in terms of live plant material and posthumously through the acquisition of Joseph Armstrong's herbarium.¹⁷⁷ Their new specialist gardens (Pinetum, New Zealand, British or European, American, Chinese, Japanese, and Australian plants) progressed the Domain from a pleasure ground towards a more "botanical gardens", with an emphasis on geographical collections and education.¹⁷⁸ To this end, labels were attached to over 4000 of the 6000 species in the Domain, to bring, as Joseph Armstrong wrote, "the work up to the very latest position of botanical progress."¹⁷⁹ Much of the plant material for their specialist gardens was acquired from Veitch and Son's Royal Exotic Nursery, London, and in the case of the Australian plants, from the Sydney and Melbourne Botanic Gardens, the Hobart Royal Society Gardens and Archdeacon Davies of Hobart.¹⁸⁰ Details of successfully landed plants for the Australian garden note that, by 1881, the Armstrongs had acquired a "fairly complete collection of *Eucalyptus*" with the addition of eight named new species.¹⁸¹ Similarly, the arrival of a collection of azaleas, eight new Japanese maple species, a Japanese umbrella pine, several species of bamboo and a Japanese silkworm tree in 1878 boosted the diversity of the Japanese border.

A system of seed exchanges prompted by Joseph Armstrong's correspondence to the author of the English publication *The Garden: an illustrated weekly journal of gardening and all its branches* in 1879 further boosted species for these dedicated gardens, and also provided novelties for other areas of the Domain.¹⁸² These exchanges tended to be with plant merchants and specialist collectors. Of particular note were Dr Wallace of the New Colchester Bulb Company; The Backhouse

¹⁷⁴ For a description of the old nursery see 'Rambles around Christchurch: The Government Domain and Nursery' *The Press*, 8 February 1872, p. 2

¹⁷⁵ *The Press*, 5 September 1873, p. 2

¹⁷⁶ *The Star*, 9 December 1873, p. 2; *The Daily Southern Cross*, 10 January 1874, p. 2

¹⁷⁷ Joseph Armstrong's herbarium of 2607 sheets was acquired by the Christchurch Domains Board in 1926

¹⁷⁸ *The Press*, 25 September 1897; *The Star*, 12 October 1889, p. 4

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid*

¹⁸⁰ Two detailed lists of the plant consignments received from Veitch and Son, can be found in 'Rare Trees and Shrubs for the Domain', *The Star*, 2 May 1878, p. 2; 'Some New Arrivals', *The Star*, 22 August 1881 p. 3; *The Star*, 6 September 1880, p. 2; Domains Board Minutes 11 February 1874, CH343/133a, CCCA

¹⁸¹ *The Star*, 22 August 1881, p. 3

¹⁸² *The Star*, 8 July 1880, p. 3

Nursery, York; Bull's Establishment for New and Rare Plants, Chelsea; and the nurseryman and orchid specialist Jean Linden of Ghent, Brussels. Other unusual and rare species were donated by local nurserymen and plant enthusiasts such as the *Morus alba* var. *multicaulis* (white mulberry) seedlings Sir John Hall obtained from Florence and gifted to the Domain.¹⁸³

Although the location of many of the Armstrong's dedicated gardens remains unclear, the Australian Garden is believed to have been located reasonably close to the New Zealand Arboretum which, as previously noted, was in the general area of today's Herb Garden. A variegated Border Garden was located on the east side of the walk that led from the new nursery to the Domain Bridge (now known as the Woodland's Bridge).¹⁸⁴ This garden housed the Armstrongs' impressive collection of over 70 different variegated plants and sports and was described as being edged with dwarf variegated bamboo. It included large specimens of *Cupressus lawsoniana lutea*, *C. macrocarpa 'Aurea'*, *C. torulosa 'Aurea'*, *C. lawsoniana* var *Armstrongii* (now *Chamaecyparis lawsoniana* var *armstrongii*), *Juniperus virginiana*, *Agapanthus umbellatus*, variegated Deeringia, variegated geranium, and flax, many of which were described as originating in the Domain.¹⁸⁵ A British Garden, referred to in 1900, and likely to have been formed by the Armstrongs, was described as being “*the long garden on the north side of the central walk.*” This featured representative examples of English, Scottish and Irish plants including Scotch heather, Irish heath, teasle, Butcher's broom and double-flowering gorse.¹⁸⁶

As well as adding a substantial amount of new plant material, the Armstrongs initiated many changes in the spatial organisation of the Domain. Building upon and improving Barker's circulation system, they added a number of new walks and widened the riverside promenade in places from 7 feet to 22 feet in width. The walk along the northern side of the Archery Lawn (from the Museum to Barker's old nursery) was transformed from a 10 foot wide path into a broad imposing 24 foot wide promenade. Raised in some places by up to three inches to achieve a level surface, it was edged on its southern side by a 260 yard long Herbaceous Border Garden (extant).¹⁸⁷ Other walks were raised by some six inches to relieve flooding and enable a more dignified perambulation around the Domain and many of Enoch Barker's early river belt plantings of gum, poplar, pinaster and laurel were removed.¹⁸⁸

Other significant earthworks included the levelling of the sand mound near the Museum in 1872. Despite public misgivings that further levelling would make the Domain uninterestingly flat, this natural feature was removed to “*give a better view of the western Alps from the door of the Museum*” and provide fill for a nearby shallow gully.¹⁸⁹ Six years later, Barker's eyot on the north-west bend in the river was refashioned. Raised in height by two feet and replanted with toi toi, rhododendrons, cabbage trees, pampas grass, yuccas and ferns, it was seen as “*an agreeable contrast and relief to the monotony of the willows.*”¹⁹⁰

¹⁸³ *The Press*, 8 February 1872, p. 2

¹⁸⁴ *The Star*, 22 April 1875, p. 3

¹⁸⁵ Christopher Mudd writing in the *Gardener's Chronicle*, Volume 22, August 1884, p. 204; Nairn's Catalogue for 1914, p. 3; *The Press*, 14 March 1974, p. 5; *Journal of the Canterbury Agricultural and Pastoral Association*, Vol. VI. 1918, p. 24

¹⁸⁶ *The Press*, 21 April 1900, p. 5

¹⁸⁷ John Armstrong's report 'Progress of the Park and Domain' to the Domains Board, 6 February 1875, Domains Board Minutes, CH343/133a, CCCA; *The Star*, 22 April 1875, p. 3

¹⁸⁸ *The Star*, 22 April 1875, p. 3

¹⁸⁹ *The Star*, 6 September 1872, p. 2

¹⁹⁰ *The Star*, 29 April 1878, p. 2



Figure 3.8. Ca. 1875 view of the front (Armstrong) Lawn with wide walk and densely planted boundary. The temporary paling fence on Antigua Street is visible and park signage can be seen positioned at the intersection of the walks. A newly planted *Auracaria*, believed to have been planted in 1875 by either Sir George Grey or the Marquess of Normanby, can be seen in the foreground.

Source: Wynn Williams collection, Ref 1982.199.7, CMDRC



Figure 3.9. View upstream to the bridge between the Acclimatisation Grounds and the Domain 1873-1880. Barker's gums are underplanted with veronica (hebe) and narrow turf ribbon borders edge either side of the Domain walks. Source: Ref: P78-014/4, HC

Plant and tree trialling

A significant proportion of the work undertaken by the Armstrongs in the 1870s and 1880s was concerned with the cultivation and trialling of forest trees and other exotic flora deemed to have economic utility. Brought into the country by the New Zealand Government, these plants were redistributed to domains, local councils, acclimatisation societies and the Christchurch and Dunedin botanic gardens, usually by James Hector,¹⁹¹ and their industrial and/or economic potential was carefully assessed. Examples of these dispatches in the 1870s and early 1880s included:

- Flax - received from the Government in 1869. These proved to be too tender for the open ground in the Domain.¹⁹²
- Forest tree seed – received from (Sir) James Hector, Wellington Botanic Garden, in 1870 and likely to have been sourced from Musoorie, India (in the case of the Indian conifer seed), Kew (European conifer seed) and Los Angeles (Californian conifer seeds).¹⁹³ The seed dispatched to the Christchurch Domain included *Pinus insignis*, *P. Coulteri*, *P. Sabiniana*, *P. Benthamiana*, *P. Balsamea*, *Wellingtonia Gigantea*, *Abies excelsa*, *A. mertensiana*, *Biota occidentalis*, *B. orientalis*, *B. plicata*, (*Biota* is now known as *Thuja*) *Cupressus pendula*, *C. macrocarpa*, *C. torulosa* *Cashmeriana*, *Cupressus sempervirens*, black, white, and red American ash and yews.¹⁹⁴ These were successfully cultivated.¹⁹⁵
- Additional packets of American tree seed from San Francisco, dispatched via the Colonial Museum between 1870 and 1879. Armstrong's reports suggest that he had mixed success cultivating these with some of the seeds proving to be too old to be viable.¹⁹⁶
- Packets of Californian seed - from E. C. Moore (Seedsman) of San Francisco in 1870. These included *Pinus contorta*, *P. Monticola*, *Picea amabilis*, (now known as *Abies amabilis*) *Abies pattoni*, *Magnolia grandiflora*, Californian holly, Deciduous Californian oak, Evergreen Californian oak, *Libocedrus decurrens* (now *Calocedrus decurrens*) and two species of *Urtica* (nettle) together with other species previously dispatched via the Colonial Museum.¹⁹⁷
- White mulberry plants from San Francisco acquired from the Government in 1871.¹⁹⁸
- Additional conifer seed from E. C. Moore in 1872 including *Pinus radiata*, *Thuja Gigantea* (now *Thuja plicata* *Donn*), *Abies douglassi*, *Pinus insignis*, *Cupressus lawsoniana*, *Cupressus macrocarpa*.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹¹ James Hector controlled many aspects of early New Zealand scientific endeavor. In his role as head of the Geological Survey he distributed plant material brought into the country by the Government, and in his roles as Director of the Wellington Botanic Garden and Director of the Colonial Museum he distributed plants raised from seed that had also been brought in to the New Zealand by the Government.

¹⁹² *AJHRNZ* 1872, G-17. Further Papers Relative to the Preparation of the Phormium Fibre, p. 21

¹⁹³ Shepherd, R. W. (1984) The Wellington Botanic Garden: an Important Historical Garden, *RNZIH Annual Journal*, No. 12, p. 109

¹⁹⁴ Plant names transcribed as per John Armstrong's letter of 20 December 1871 using period genus/species nomenclature

¹⁹⁵ Armstrong, Gardens to Secretary of Public Works - report on experimental planting of American trees, CAAR 19946 CH287 ICPW 1177/1871, CP237, ANZ

¹⁹⁶ Report of the Government Gardener on the results obtained from the seeds of the American Trees, CAAR 20410 CH287/CP643c, PPC11, ANZ; Correspondence re seeds of American trees - 3 Jan. 1872, CAAR 20410 CH287/CP664a, PPC4, ANZ

¹⁹⁷ J. F. Armstrong to Provincial Secretary – report on Californian seeds, CAAR 19936 CH287 CP129 ICP55 1157/1872, ANZ

¹⁹⁸ James Hector to Under Colonial Secretary, 19 June 1871. MU 465 Colonial Museum Outward Letter Book Two, p. 236, MNZ

¹⁹⁹ Shepherd, R. W. (1990) *Horticulture in New Zealand*, 1(2), p. 30; *The Press*, 8 February 1872, p. 2

- Packets of the seed of black walnut, American walnut and hickory from Professor Kellogg, San Francisco, in 1875.²⁰⁰
- Sugar beet seeds – sent by James Hector, Wellington Botanic Gardens, in 1875 and 1877.²⁰¹
- Conifer seed including macrocarpa seed – sent by James Hector from Miller and Sievers, San Francisco in 1879.²⁰²
- Australian economic plants from William Guilfoyle, Director, Melbourne Botanic Gardens in 1880.²⁰³
- American conifer seed – sent in 1882 from James Hector, Wellington Botanic Garden.²⁰⁴

Much of this seed stock was grown on by the Armstrongs for use in both the Domain and Hagley Park. Duff (1981) has noted that the *Sequoiadendron giganteum* (Wellingtonia) that were planted in a line near Pilgrim's Corner were grown from seed in 1873.²⁰⁵ This, as well as other species planted in the Pinetum and Hagley Park, are likely to have originated from the American tree seed stock received in 1870.

The Domain was also an important distributor of flora on a regional level. It was often at the second tier of distribution below Wellington Botanic Gardens and, in addition, operated its own distribution system. Forest tree seed and young plants were, for the most part, freely dispatched upon request, to Roads Boards, Agricultural Associations, Boards of Conservators and municipalities for their use in planting Education Reserves, church grounds and domains.²⁰⁶

Revenue for the cultivation and trailing of exotic species was received from central government by way of an annual grant. However, by 1879 the grant had been reduced to £1,000 which was allocated equally between the provincial botanic gardens.²⁰⁷ Despite these cutbacks, in 1881 the Armstrongs were directed by the Domains Board to establish a specialist exotic economic plant nursery in South Hagley Park, where “*the ground was stiffer than the sandy soil of the main nursery.*”²⁰⁸ Duff (1981) has documented its location as South Hagley Park near Moorhouse Avenue and the site of today's netball courts. The area was developed in conjunction with a caretaker's cottage, and prison labour was used to break in the ground.²⁰⁹

By the end of 1881 the Armstrongs had amassed a remarkable collection of over 180 different economic plant species. These were documented in an eight page publication entitled *Plants Suitable For Cultivation in New Zealand; List of Economic (Omitting the Commoner sorts already in General Cultivation)* and those species under cultivation by the Armstrongs at that time were annotated.²¹⁰ The diversity of their collection was impressive and included numerous medicinal

²⁰⁰ American Seeds. CAAR CH287 ICPS 1790/1875, CP161, ANZ

²⁰¹ 'Beet Seeds Issues to Superintendents for Distribution on 25th Feby 1875' MU 465 Book Three, p. 597, MNZ; *The Star*, 29 April 1878, p. 2

²⁰² IA1 79/534, ANZ as cited in Shepherd W. & Cook, W. (1988) *The Botanic Garden Wellington*, p. 102

²⁰³ *The Star*, 6 September 1880, p. 2

²⁰⁴ J. Armstrong to J. Hector, 20 May 1882, MU 147, Box 5, Folder 8, MNZ

²⁰⁵ Duff, G. (1981) *The History of the Botanic Gardens and Hagley Park*, unpaginated

²⁰⁶ Letter, 12 December 1871, Hall to Hector, cited in Shepherd & Cook p. 107; *The Star*, 9 July 1875, p. 2

²⁰⁷ Shepherd & Cook, p. 57

²⁰⁸ Domains Board minutes suggest that prior to the establishment of this nursery economic plants were cultivated in the main nursery

²⁰⁹ Duff, G. (1981) *The History of the Botanic Gardens and Hagley Park*, unpaginated

²¹⁰ This is understood to have been prepared for the Government which subsequently published it as the paper

plants, aromatics, textile-yielding species, fibre plants, dye-plants, plants for tanning purposes and basket chair work, and other categories. (Refer appendices for publication.) The progeny of this stock was distributed widely throughout New Zealand and a number of species, such as olives, wattles and marram grass passed into general cultivation. Medicinal plants, whose cultivation had been endorsed by the Pharmaceutical Society for instructive and industrial purposes, were trialled with interest²¹¹ and this aspect of the nursery's operation was the subject of overseas scrutiny with *The Argus* (Melbourne) reporting on the medicinal plants under cultivation and the *Chemist and Druggist of Australasia* publishing a full list of the medicinal species growing in the nursery.²¹²

In October 1884 preparatory work for an additional or substitute economic nursery was undertaken in South Hagley Park. This was referred to in Domains Board minutes and Armstrong's reports as the 'Economic Nursery Addington'. Following initial spadework the site was found to be unsuitable for nursery purposes because of its high bog iron content and the work appears to have been abandoned.²¹³ It is unclear if a further site was established, but the economic nursery operation continued until 1886/1887, ceasing when central Government reallocated its funding.

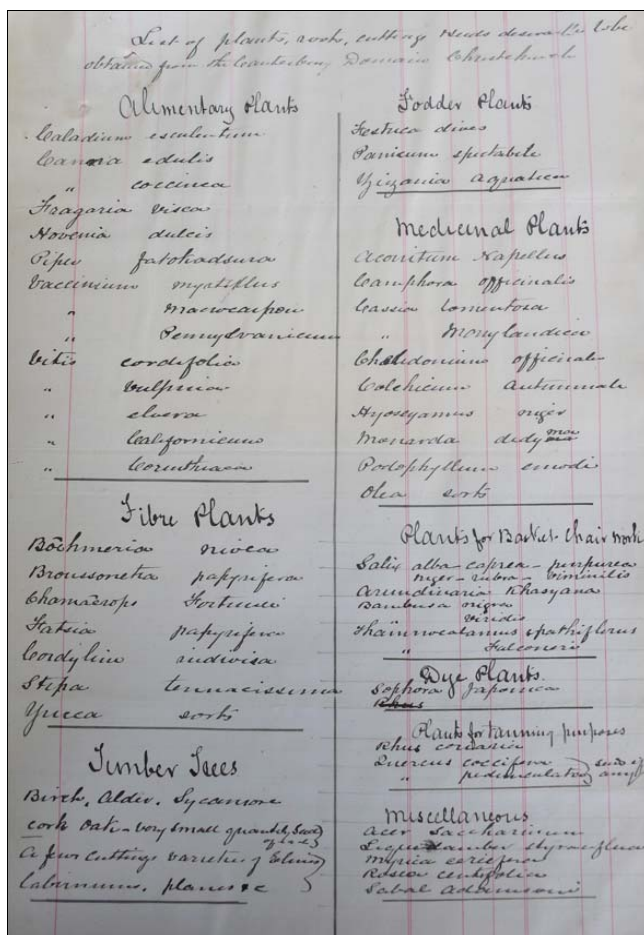


Figure 3.10. 'List of plants, roots, cuttings and seeds desirable to be obtained from the Canterbury Domain Christchurch' as recommended for trial by the Forest Service at Whangarei and requested by the Superintendent of State Forests Source: AGCT 18487 LS53/10 Registered Files. Forests and Agricultural Branch- Miscellaneous papers, ANZ.

'Plants suitable for Cultivation in New Zealand', in 1884. It was also published in sections in the *New Zealand Country Journal* commencing May 1884

²¹¹ Dunedin Domains Board 1878-1884, Minutes 9 August 1882, Item 6, DCCA; Second Annual Report of the Councils of the Pharmacy Society of New Zealand, held in Christchurch in 1882, PSA

²¹² *The Argus* (Melbourne) 10 October 1882, p.10

²¹³ Christchurch Domains Board Letter Book 1873-1888, p. 360, CH343/133b, CCCA; Armstrong's report to the Domains Board 10 December 1884, p. 152, Board Minute Book 1864-1906, CH343/133a, CCCA

Entertainments and new structures

A number of new structures, entertainments and functional spaces were introduced in the years between 1871 and 1885. Regular Saturday evening band performances by the Canterbury Yeomanry Cavalry became a popular feature from late 1871 and, in early 1873, the Archery and Croquet Clubs were granted an area near the Museum, on what is now known as the Archery Lawn. Although the appropriation of this ground was the subject of frequent public protests the clubs continued to have a presence in the Domain into the 1890s.²¹⁴

A small five-roomed Head Gardener's cottage was constructed on the main lawn in 1872 to specifications provided by John Armstrong (figure 3.12). This replaced an earlier small Government Gardener's cottage.²¹⁵ Armstrong's new cottage was located within the footprint of the present-day Curator's house, with its verandah and single bay fronting the gravel path running parallel to Antigua Street. Described when it was nearing completion in late June 1872, one journalist wrote “[Mr Armstrong] is to be envied, not a little, on the very commanding and attractive position which the house occupies.”²¹⁶ Concurrent with its construction a 30 foot by 10 foot brick propagating house with boiler shed was constructed in the nursery near Armstrong's office.²¹⁷

The main lawn was further altered with the placement of the Moorhouse Statue in 1885. This cast bronze monument to William Sefton Moorhouse was positioned near the convergence of two walks and aligned with Hereford Street so that it could be seen from outside the Domain as well as inside.²¹⁸ The sculpture's placement necessitated the relocation of what was known as the Rolleston Sundial which had occupied a location near-by since March 1874. (see Volume 3: 1.11.2 and Volume 3: appendix 1 for further details.) A children's play lawn was located between the statue and the Curator's cottage, and Domains Board Minutes suggest that a small rose garden may have also been a feature on the main lawn at this time.²¹⁹ A footbridge linking the Acclimatisation Grounds with the Domain was built in October 1873.²²⁰ Described at the time of its construction as the most handsome bridge on the Avon River, its value was further enhanced with the formation of a 14 foot wide walk from Riccarton Road directly opposite the gates of the South Hagley Park cricket ground.

In 1875 the paling boundary fence on Antigua Street was removed leaving what was described as “an agreeable promenade,” edged on the Domain side by a “lofty live” holly hedge.²²¹ In December 1883 a set of impressive main gates was installed at the Hereford Street entrance (extant). These were a gift from the organisers of the 1882 Industrial Exhibition. The gates formerly in that position were relocated to a new entry point beside the Museum, replacing a simple turn-stile. Barker's tree-ornamented promenade on Antigua Street was extended with the planting of a double row of horse chestnuts from Worcester Street to Gloucester Streets. These are understood to have been imported as trees from England and donated by R. J. S. Harman, who was both a member of the governing body of Christ's College and also Chairman of the Domains Board at this time.²²²

²¹⁴ A photograph of this group appears in Woodward, J. (1987) *A Canterbury Album*, p. 118

²¹⁵ The advertisement for the Government Gardener's position included reference to the “use of a small cottage in the Domain for the Government Gardener”, *The Press*, 9 August 1867, p. 1

²¹⁶ *The Star*, 28 June 1872, p. 2

²¹⁷ 'Plans for cottage and propagating house', 20 May 1872, CAAR 19946 CH287 CP239 ICPW 453/1872, ANZ

²¹⁸ *The Star*, 16 June 1885, p. 3

²¹⁹ Domains Board Minutes, 11 February 1874, p. 68 & 8 June 1874, p. 73, CH343/133a, CCCA

²²⁰ *The Press*, 9 October 1873, p. 2

²²¹ J. F. Armstrong's report to the Domains Board, 6 February 1875, CH343/133a, CCCA

²²² Clark, G. L. (1979) *Rolleston Avenue and Park Terrace*, p. 10

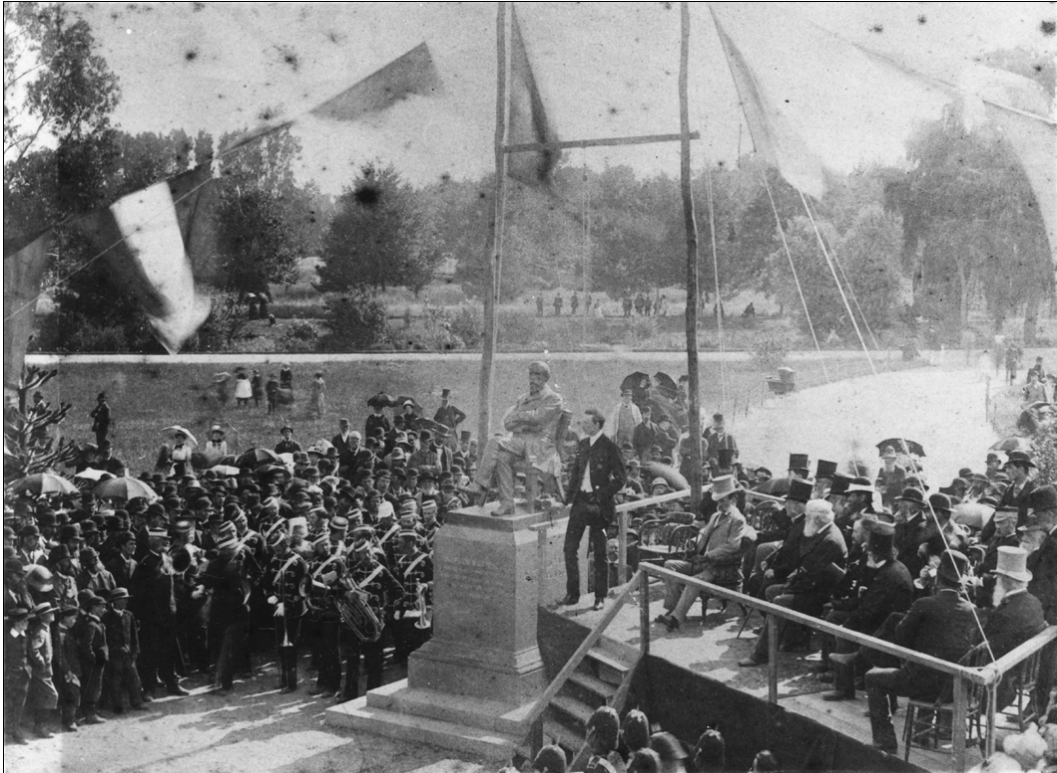


Figure 3.11. The unveiling of the William Sefton Moorhouse statue, 22 December 1885. Mr William Moorhouse (son) addressing the crowd. Note original pedestal base with two bluestone steps. Source: F- 118885-1/2, W D Ferguson Collection, ATL



Figure 3.12. Postcard showing the Head Gardener's cottage which is foregrounded by the Rolleston sundial. This house appears to have been replaced at some point by another timber residence as seen in appendix 2
Source: PAC-10009676, State Library of Victoria

Commemorative events

New specimen trees were planted to commemorate visits by local dignitaries and royalty and these were placed on what was referred to as the “historical portion of the Domain” (Armstrong and Archery Lawns). The trees used to mark these events were overwhelmingly exotic and appear to have been displayed in the gardenesque style²²³ popularised by J.C. Loudon. The first of these occasions, on April 24 1869, involved the planting of a *Wellingtonia gigantea*, *Cedrus libani*, *Cedrus deodara*, totara and oak. These were planted by Prince Albert, the Duke of Edinburgh.

Other commemorative plantings included:

- April 1870. Either an *Araucaria imbricata* or a variegated English elm planted on behalf of Sir George Grey²²⁴
- April 10th 1870. *Araucaria sp.* x 2, oak and *Ailanthus* planted by Governor (Sir) George Bowen
- May 1st 1875. *Quercus robur* and *Araucaria araucana* planted by Marquess of Normanby
- May 1st 1875. *Cedrus libani* planted by Marchioness of Normanby
- 1880. *Cedrus deodara* planted to mark John Armstrong's birthday
- date unknown *Wellingtonia* planted for Sir James Fergusson by Joseph Armstrong

Other significant plantings were noted by Joseph Armstrong to have been “lost to the furnace” by 1916 while others, such as those planted by Sir Arthur Gordon (Lord Stanmore, Governor of New Zealand 1880-1882), were never formally recorded. Gordon, a habitual and seemingly random tree planter, was described by Armstrong as spending some of his leisure in tree-planting. “Accompanied by Lady Gordon and by a footman carrying a basket of young trees, he would go forth quietly and plant trees where he thought they should be. He did this so quietly that the fruits of these labours of his are an unknown quantity.”²²⁵

This marking of place was also about the making of place, and the presence of commemorative trees and the occasions associated with their planting, added an additional layer of interest and importance to the Domain. Referred to by one journalist of the day as “autographs in the book of nature”, the growing collection of specially planted trees was an esteemed and important aspect of the Domain. However, the public was at greater variance in its view of the Domain as a whole, and in the early 1880s, divergent opinion saw the landscape variously praised for its skilfully devised flower beds, smooth and velvety turf and rare varieties of trees and flowers, and criticized for lawns that were “up and down like a camel's back”, “jumbled-up over grown borders” and general lack of design, taste and proper plant nomenclature.²²⁶

In 1889, after twenty-two years developing the Domain and Hagley Park, John and Joseph Armstrong resigned their positions because of unresolvable differences of opinion with the Domains Board. This appears to have been largely due to the fundamentally different ways in which each party saw the role and function of the Domain. During their employ, the Armstrongs had initiated and fostered a strong scientific culture in the Domain, and at the time of their resignation the plant collection numbered “5,849 species and varieties, exclusive of garden varieties which amounted to about a thousand more.”²²⁷

²²³ A design style considered eminently suitable for Botanic Gardens, which promoted the display of plants as single specimens, placed to best advantage to show their individuality rather than grouped for picturesque effect

²²⁴ Details of memorial stone recorded in *Journal of the Canterbury Agricultural and Pastoral Association* Vol VI, 1918. Details of Elm sent by Grey from Kawai Island recorded in *The Sun*, 30 November 1915

²²⁵ *The Sun*, 30 November 191(5)?, Christchurch Domains Board – No. 1 Album, CH343/80c, CCCA

²²⁶ *Otago Witness*, 18 February 1882, p. 29; *Gardener's Chronicle*, Volume 22, August 16, 1884, p. 204

²²⁷ Joseph Armstrong to the Editor of the Press, *The Press*, 25 September 1897, p. 5

3.3.2 Acclimatisation Grounds

The Acclimatisation Society's operation continued to expand and, as the group had more success in landing live birds and raising their offspring, additional aviaries, a pheasant house and hatching boxes were constructed. Offshore trading of native birds, lizards etc continued unabated, and large numbers of domestic fowl were bred as currency in exchange for native species that were then on-traded. Silkworm eggs from Japan (via the Melbourne Acclimatisation Society) and *Ailanthus* trees were introduced into the gardens in the hope of forming a viable cocoonery and considerable energy was expended in the development of additional ponds and the sinking of artesian wells to ensure the health of trout and salmon.²²⁸

A lengthy description of the grounds published in 1871 described the intensity of the Society's operation at this time. Bird coops were positioned west of the Riccarton Road entrance gates and aviaries were located to the west and east of the Curator's cottage. A small conservatory housed the Society's sericulture operation, and another building doubled as a food storage house and incubator for hatching pheasant and quail eggs. Plantations of lupins and sunflowers for the pheasants and other poultry were under cultivation below the terrace at the foot of a small stream. A pheasantry was located across the stream, as well as a cage containing ferrets and an opossum. Crops of Belgian millet for the birds, sugar beet for the deer and other animals and hemp were also under cultivation nearby. Beyond the pond system, which incorporated an ingenious eel trap and supported English water lilies, the Curator had fashioned a whitebait station. Towards the river there was a wire netting fish house that featured a fern collection at one end. Beyond this, an *Alianthus* plantation had been planted to feed the Society's silkworms.²²⁹

Not long after this description was published, the Society's grounds were reduced in size with the transfer of two parcels of land to the North Canterbury Hospital Board in 1873. This enabled the construction of a fever ward and the formation of a kitchen-garden. Two years later an additional area of Acclimatisation Society land, a little over five acres between the creek and the Avon River, was given over to the Hospital.²³⁰ This was for "*the [hospital] convalescents to partake of necessary exercise.*" This land, it was noted was only used indirectly by the Society but contained many trees that had been planted by them for privacy and screening. In line with period medical theory, many of these trees were removed because of their potential to hold stale air and promote diseases such as tuberculosis and consumption. In their place, new ornamental gardens and walks were laid out by John Armstrong in his capacity as Government Gardener.²³¹

By 1882 a portion of the Acclimatisation Grounds had been formally opened to the public free of charge. Described as offering a most pleasant and shady promenade, the public area contained three "nicely-contrived" ponds, that in 1885, were stocked with goldfish and perch.²³² The private operation contained nine ponds dedicated to the breeding of gold fish, trout, perch, tench and West Coast grayling. Associated with these were trout hatching houses and ornamental races used for rearing young fish and trout stripping. In addition to fish, other residents in the grounds at that time

²²⁸ *The Star*, 23 May 1868, p. 2; *The Star*, 27 January 1871, p. 2

²²⁹ For a full description of the layout of the grounds see 'A Visit to the Acclimatisation Society's Gardens', *The Press*, 22 March 1871, p. 2

²³⁰ This land and nearly eight acres more were vested in the North Canterbury Hospital Board in fee-simple under the Christchurch Hospital Act of 1887

²³¹ *The Press*, 25 September 1897, CH343/133a, CCCA; CAAR 19946 CH287/CP300 ICPW 779/1877, ANZ

²³² *Mosley, M. (1885) Illustrated Guide to Christchurch and Neighbourhood*, pp. 81-82

were Ligurian bees, a monkey, numerous fowls, opossums, native hawks, a number of Australian birds, deer and Chinese geese.²³³

Having done much to combat Canterbury's early plague-like numbers of locusts and grasshoppers through their importation of predatory birds, the Society's focus began to turn to breeding and releasing game species, particularly "feathered stock" and fish, as well as the distribution of "humble bees" for clover fertilisation. Their work in acclimatising and distributing economic plants had by this time been largely taken over by the Domains Board under the Government's direction. Trees, which had been originally planted as part of that agenda, were retained as a plantation and also formed part of the public grounds. These were described in 1882 in admiring terms by one visitor who wrote:

*Here one might imagine he was in a forest in that old land we love to think of as Home. It seemed like meeting with old friends to see the different trees, whose foliage, varying as it does in shape and hue, presents so pleasing an aspect, and renders a forest scene at Home so much more attractive than the more sober and sombre bush of New Zealand, beautiful though that may be. Of course the trees are small yet; still, considering the short time they have been planted, they have made wonderful progress.*²³⁴



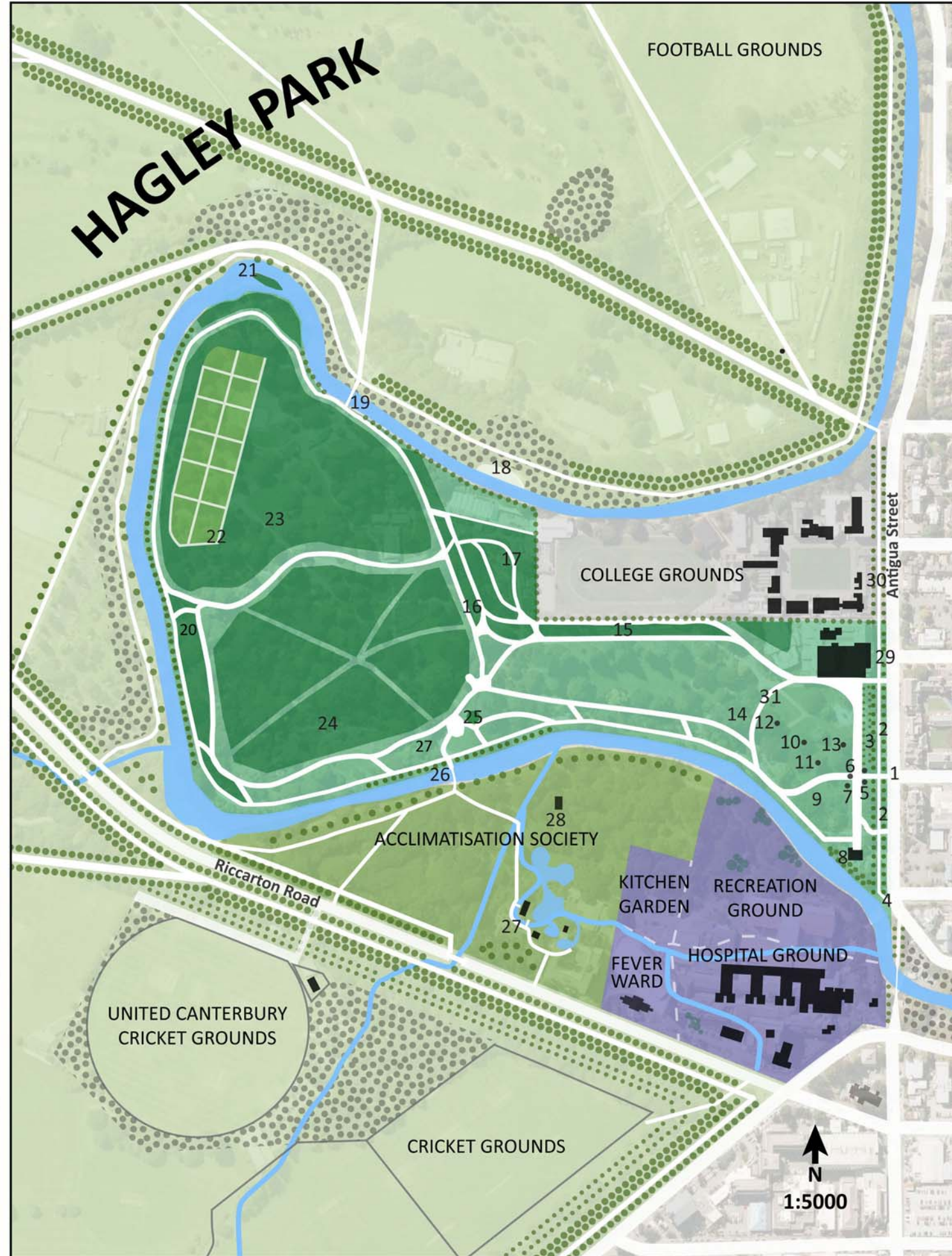
Figure 3.13. Trout operations in the Acclimatisation Grounds (undated)
Source: Stereoscopic postcard, L. Beaumont, private collection

²³³ *Reports of the Canterbury Acclimatisation Society 1882-1885*. AEQH 21352 CH1002 Box 37/ b, ANZ

²³⁴ *Otago Witness*, 18 February 1882, p. 29

GOVT DOMAIN & ACCLIMATISATION SOCIETY GROUNDS 1889 Improvements

- 1. Armstrong's five-room cottage and shrubbery before May 1873. Source: Historical photograph collection, Photograph 35, CBGPA
- 2. View of front lawn, entrance and shrubbery ca. 1875 Source: Wynn Williams Collection, Ref 1982.199.7, CMDRC
- 3. Antigua Street before 1885. Source: PA 91-023-229a, HL



Key

- 1. Iron entrance gates
- 2. Chain-wide avenue of forest trees backed by holly hedge
- 3. Shrubbery including viburnum, laurel, lilac, cypress, thuja, philadelphus, deutzia and rose trees
- 4. Wicket-gate for hospital patient access into Domain
- 5. Paired cypress
- 6. Moorhouse Statue
- 7. Araucaria araucana attributed to Governor George Bowen or Sir George Grey
- 8. Curator's cottage fronted by Rolleston Sundial. Cryptomeria and Olive near cottage
- 9. General location of large pinus radiata
- 10. Prince Alfred's oak planted by the Duke of Edinburgh
- 11. Sequoiadendron giganteum planted by the Duke of Edinburgh
- 12. Marchioness of Normanby's Cedrus libani
- 13. Cedrus deodara planted to celebrate John Armstrong's birthday
- 14. Pine Mound
- 15. Herbaceous Garden containing roses, herbaceous plants and rare shrubs. Artesian well and drinking cup on south side of walk
- 16. General area of Australian Garden
- 17. New Zealand Garden, known as the Arboretum of New Zealand trees and shrubs
- 18. Bathing place with changing shed, steps to river and substantial fence
- 19. North Bridge
- 20. Variegated Border Garden edged with variegated bamboo
- 21. Refashioned eyot planted with rhododendrons, cabbage trees, toi toi, pampas grass, yuccas and ferns
- 22. Nursery with propagating house and John Armstrong's office
- 23. Open ground of new and rare conifers including Cupressus, Thujopsis, Pinus and Thuja spp.
- 24. Pinetum under-planted with Scotch rose, Irish heather and English blackberry
- 25. Edward Albert oak
- 26. Bridge linking Domain and Acclimatisation Society
- 27. Acclimatisation Society Curator's cottage
- 28. Hatchery
- 29. Rolleston Statue
- 30. Double row of horse chestnuts
- 31. Semicircular walk planted with a series of rose beds and backed with a line of Araucaria

Sources

Refer figure 3.20 Hagley Park and the Government Domain 1889 map

Figure 3.14 Map of the Government Domain and the Acclimatisation Society grounds 1889

3.3.3 Hagley Park

The Armstrongs completed the planting of Barker's peripheral belts and in some areas increased the depth of their planting, while forming permanent footpaths. Much of this work was completed in the 1873 season. It included the planting of a walk 120 feet wide and 29 chains long from the centre clump of trees at the north-west bend of the Avon River, to the Riccarton Hotel (previously known as the Plough Inn) stile, with a branch to the stile at the foot of Fendalton. These walks were planted with *Castanea sativa* (Spanish chestnut) and *Pinus insignis* (*Pinus radiata*).²³⁵ A belt of similar dimensions was planted on the north side of Hagley Park from near the Carlton Bridge to the Fendalton Road Bridge. Identified as Park Road on Strout's 1877 map, this is now known as Harper Avenue. *Tilia* (lime) and *Pinus insignis* were planted in four rows bordering a 60 feet wide walk.²³⁶

The terrace on the south-east side of North Hagley Park (north of Victoria Lake) was fashionably clump planted with *Pinus Douglasii* (Oregon pine), Larch, *Pinus picea*, *P. radiata*, *P. Sabiniana*, *P. muricata*, *P. sylvestris*, *Cupressus macrocarpa*, *C. horizontalis* and a row of *Sequoia Wellingtonia* was planted along the fenceline.²³⁷ An avenue with a total area of about five acres on Riccarton Road opposite the north-west bend of the river to the West belt was planted entirely with *Cupressus macrocarpa*.²³⁸ This was referred to as "Macrocarpa Road" in plans drawn by Leonard Harper, Chairman of the Domains Board in 1882.²³⁹

The footpaths formed in association with the development of the perimeter belts were gazetted by the Provincial Government in May 1875.²⁴⁰ These extended from the Hospital to the south-west corner of North Hagley Park opposite the Riccarton Hotel and on to the south-east corner of the Park opposite what was by then known as Fendalton Bridge, ending at the Carlton Bridge. One year later the Fendalton Road footbridge was erected on the east of the island almost opposite the Fendalton (carriage) Bridge, improving pedestrian access into the Park.²⁴¹

As previously noted, the original circulation patterns crossing North Hagley Park appear to have been formed from early desire lines that linked the College (Armagh Street) Bridge with stiles that had been erected to access Fendalton, Riccarton and Great South Roads. In early 1873 there was a call for planting along these unformed walks to provide shade and shelter for the considerable number of people crossing the Park.²⁴² This request was seemingly addressed in part by the Domains Board and, four months later, journalists documented the fencing in of the College Bridge to Fendalton and Riccarton Road routes across the Park, and the preparation of tree pits for the planting of "rare Californian Pines".²⁴³ These were planted to a depth of two chains and were formed using customary period conventions as practised by the Armstrongs. This involved the planting of particular combinations of trees so that resinous trees could "nurse" hardwood species. Nurse trees were removed after they had forced the preferred species to produce tall trunks with few side branches, these being shaded off by their close proximity to the pines.

²³⁵ *The Star*, 5 May 1873, p. 2 & 9 December 1873, p. 2; Armstrong's report 'Progress of the Park and Domain' to the Domains Board, 6 February 1875, CH3438/133a, CCCA

²³⁶ *The Star*, 9 December 1873, p. 2

²³⁷ *Ibid*

²³⁸ *The Star*, 9 December 1873, p. 2; *The Daily Southern Cross*, 10 January 1874, p. 2

²³⁹ Plan in Domains Board Minute Book 1864-1906, Minutes 28 June 1882, CH343/133a, CCCA

²⁴⁰ *Government gazette of the Province of Canterbury*, 8 May 1875

²⁴¹ *The Star*, 6 April 1876, p. 2

²⁴² *The Star*, 12 March 1873, p. 2

²⁴³ *The Star*, 3 July 1873, p. 2

The Armstrongs favoured Scots Pine, *Pinus pinaster*, *Pinus insignis* and *Pinus muricata* as nurse trees and advocated a staged removal programme of nurse trees that extended over a fifteen year period. In describing this approach, Joseph Armstrong wrote “*the whole of every second row and every second plant in the other rows should be nurses, these nurses removed as soon as they become a useful size - some cut in the fifth year and the remainder in the tenth and fifteenth years in equal proportions.*”²⁴⁴

As part of the transformation of North Hagley Park's internal circulation system, dressed and levelled walks were formed, but it was not until 1884 that a proper footpath replaced the 1870s track between the College Bridge and Fendalton Road.²⁴⁵ The construction of a further system of pathways following the meander of the river began in earnest in 1880. The first stage of this system, a footpath inside the plantation on the river bank facing Park Terrace from the College Bridge to the Carlton Bridge, was under construction in July of that year. Other footpaths, from the bridge connecting the Park with the Domain, to the path leading to Riccarton Road and from the Carlton Bridge to Helmore's Land Bridge, were completed over the following two years.²⁴⁶

In South Hagley Park, a plantation was formed at the south-west corner using trees that had been removed from the planted avenues on Lincoln Road (Hagley Avenue) and Riccarton Road (Riccarron Avenue). A new or additional avenue was planted in 1875 on each of these roads, and along the south and west town belts to near Washbourne's (Washbourne) Creek. This was followed by the formation of a path from the Addington Saleyards (corner of Deans Avenue and Blenheim Road) to the Riccarton Hotel.²⁴⁷

While pathway construction continued, various predations on the trees in the Park necessitated repeated replanting. This was particularly the case in South Hagley Park where escaped or released hares from the Acclimatisation Society grounds had destroyed so many trees that, by 1874, the south perimeter belt had been planted three times (Enoch Barker's original mixed tree belt had been replaced first with limes and then with elms²⁴⁸). By 1874, hares had destroyed all of the elms planted along the south belt and these were replanted in 1876 with cork-bark elm and ash trees in the area opposite the Addington Saleyards.²⁴⁹ Considered to be a less desirable tree species by the Domains Board these were replaced the following year with English elm and *Pinus radiata*, the latter to act as nurses.²⁵⁰ Other necessary replanting was undertaken in 1884 following the destruction of 185 trees in the inner avenue of the Lincoln Road (Hagley Avenue) by pupils from the Lincoln Road School.²⁵¹

²⁴⁴ Armstrong, J. B. The Forming and Management of Plantations, *New Zealand Country Journal*, Vol. 3, No. 2, March 1, 1879, p. 101

²⁴⁵ *The Star*, 2 October 1884, p. 2

²⁴⁶ *The Star*, 6 July 1881, p. 3; *The Star*, 3 October 1882, p. 2; Quarterly Report to Domains Board, 1 October 1884, CH343/133a, CCCA

²⁴⁷ Armstrong's report 'Progress of the Park and Domain' to the Domains Board, 6 February 1875, CH343/133a, CCCA

²⁴⁸ *The Star*, 24 November 1874, p. 2

²⁴⁹ Armstrong's report 'Progress of the Park and Domain' to the Domains Board, 6 February 1875, CH343/133a, CCCA; Herriott, E. M. (1919) p. 439

²⁵⁰ Domains Board Minutes, October 1876, CH343/133a, CCCA

²⁵¹ Curator's Quarterly Report to Board, 1 October 1884, CH343/133a, CCCA

Recreation and amusements

For the most part trees in North Hagley Park escaped depredation²⁵² and, by the 1880s, Barker's perimeter avenues had attained such reasonable proportions that calls for the formation of a route de roi or 'Rotten Row' as it was commonly known, were made in late 1882.²⁵³ Subscriptions towards the cost of laying out this soft ride for carriage and saddle horses were received from a number of affluent Christchurch gentlemen, and construction of the first stage, from near the Carlton Hotel to the Riccarton Hotel, was in progress by November 1882.²⁵⁴ The ride was extended in stages when finances and planting allowed and was well patronised by the "well-to-do." There was, however, an early and ongoing conflict between the Row's accepted sedate and social raison d'être and bicyclists and horse trainers who attempted to use it as a travel corridor or training track.



Figure 3.15. View of Hagley Park (date unknown) showing the density of the plantation that prompted descriptions of Hagley Park's sylvan beauty
Source: C/N E3640/2 HC

The charm and attraction of the Avon River

From the earliest times the Avon River was one of the Christchurch's most popular recreational amenities. In the 1870s it was the venue for boating sports through Hagley Park and, by the early 1880s, it had become a popular stretch of river for social boating excursions, boosted by the construction of the Antigua Boatsheds. Pleasure parties in small 'pulling boats' were described as making a lively scene on the river, and the full moon was said to have special charms for boating parties in the evenings.²⁵⁵

²⁵² *The Star*, 24 November 1874, p. 2 notes that some of the rear trees in the north belt near the Fendalton Road were destroyed

²⁵³ Rotten Row or Rotten-row is a corruption of the expression 'route de roi' that means 'Kings Road'. An English social ritual dating from end of the 17th century, it was the fashionable place to be seen in Victorian England, where the upper classes would disport themselves on horse back or in horse-drawn carriages in their finest clothes particularly on a Sunday

²⁵⁴ Domains Board Letter book, 17 November 1882, p. 303, CH343/133b, CCCA

²⁵⁵ *Auckland Star*, 24 May 1890, p. 2

Use of the river was not limited to boating, and a dedicated bathing area in the Avon River appears on maps drawn in 1868, although it is likely that casual bathing in this area had been popular for some time prior to this. The bathing place, as it was known, was located upstream of the footbridge behind the present (2012) nursery, and was surrounded by a thick belt of trees (figure 3.20).

Although public bathing was endorsed as an invigorating and health-giving pursuit by the Hagley Park Bathing Committee, the practice was not without its detractors, and complaints concerning instances of immodest bathing costumes and improper behaviour in full view of the public were common.²⁵⁶ These protests from visitors to the Domain, and a growing discord between the boating public and recreational bathers, eventually resulted in a daily bathing prohibition between 1pm and 7pm and the erection of a wattled screen to conceal bathers from public view.²⁵⁷

In 1875 a corrugated iron and timber changing box, without a roof or door, was constructed for the use of the bathers. This accommodated a dozen bathers and was associated with a water closet, gangway and a set of formed steps that descended into the river.²⁵⁸ Six years later, the thinning of trees adjacent to the bathing place necessitated the construction of a substantial fence to screen bathers. At the same time as discussions were underway concerning this fence, the construction of a springboard and other “*bathing adjuncts*” on the river were proposed. The addition of this equipment remains unconfirmed.²⁵⁹



Figure 3.16. Boating on the Avon River in a row boat and pulling boat. Boating was one of Christchurch's most pleasant attractions according to the 1884 Union Steam Ship Company's New Zealand Guide book. Source: C/N E2746/21, HC

²⁵⁶ *The Star*, 21 June 1880, p. 3; *The Star*, 13 October 1882, p. 2; *The Star*, 21 January 1886, p. 3

²⁵⁷ A construction of poles intertwined with twigs, reeds, or branches, used to construct walls, fences, and roofs

²⁵⁸ *The Star*, 9 February 1875, p. 3; Repairs to bathing place, Hagley Park. CAAR 19946 CH287 CP255 ICPW4019/1874, ANZ

²⁵⁹ *The Star*, 24 October 1882, p. 2

A landscape of spectacle and sporting endeavour

Yearly Volunteer Reviews continued to be held in North Hagley Park. These involved review parades, field operations and occasional mock battles which were carried out to pre-conceived plans and incorporated a large artillery gun, rounds of blank ammunition and smoke effects.²⁶⁰ Well-supported by the public, these reviews grew in popularity and size, with the 1880 Review attended by over 2,000 volunteer soldiers from Dunedin, Southland, Nelson, Wellington and other points north. Competitive trials, sabre, bayonet and sword drill, as well as various manoeuvres across the Park, were watched by several thousand spectators who were also entertained by military bands.²⁶¹

The central portion of both North and South Hagley Parks continued to be leased for the pasturing of sheep, as well as cows for the town milk supply, their presence reinforcing the bucolic English parkland aesthetic that Barker had laid the foundations for some years earlier. Around and within this, a number of newly-formed sporting groups began to occupy space, some adding to the built structures that had begun to pepper Hagley Park. These new groups included the Christchurch Golf Club that had officially formed in 1873. Although small parties had begun playing on ground near Christ's College from September 1872, the golf links were not formalised until April 1873, by which time additional clubs and balls had arrived from England.²⁶² Despite initial reports of excellent turf, by 1874 the Hagley Links were deemed unsuitable because of long grass and regular damage wrought by cattle, and the club relocated to a four-hole course in Avonside. By 1875 the Christchurch Golf Club had petered out and remained in hiatus until the 1890s.²⁶³

A more successful sporting endeavour was initiated by the newly-formed Canterbury Coursing Club which had been granted permission to use a portion of North Hagley Park in 1877.²⁶⁴ Despite a less than successful first meeting, this club went on to hold regular events over May, June and July (when hares were in season) each year until 1881. Events were modelled on the British coursing system and "*lovers of the leash*", as they were described, pitted the athletic ability of their greyhound or sighthound against another dog in a visual (as against scented) pursuit of a hare in the Hagley Park Stakes.²⁶⁵ As competitors, judges and others involved in the races became more familiar with their roles, the sport grew in popularity and in 1878, over two thousand spectators watched as "*the hare beating commenced on the north side of the North Park, worked round to the College bridge, along the eastern sides of the park to the Carlton bridge, and ended where the beaters had commenced.*"²⁶⁶ Competitors and dogs from various parts of the colony were noted to have attended these events until 'rowdyism', crowding and the limited extent of the Hagley Park landscape saw coursing events relocated to more challenging terrains.²⁶⁷

The Park was also a popular ground for football and rugby. Prior to 1882 the Christchurch Football Club played on South Hagley Park. In 1884 a new ground of three acres was laid out for the club in North Hagley Park, alongside grounds occupied by the Merivale Football Club.²⁶⁸ Numerous other

²⁶⁰ *The Star*, 6 October 1870, p. 4

²⁶¹ *Evening Post*, 29 March 1880, p. 2

²⁶² *The Star*, 4 September 1872, p. 2; *The Star*, 23 April 1873, p. 2

²⁶³ Kelly, G. M. (1971) *Golf in New Zealand: a centennial history*, p. 23

²⁶⁴ Advertisement for the first event, *The Press*, 28 June 1877, p. 1

²⁶⁵ The objective of coursing was to test and judge the athletic ability of the dogs rather than to kill the hare

²⁶⁶ *The Press*, 25 May 1878, p. 5

²⁶⁷ The Park's undulating and tussocky nature and planted shelter around all sides afforded the hares too much protection

²⁶⁸ Brittenden, R. T. (1963) "*Give 'em the axe*": *the first hundred years of the Christchurch football club*, p. 19

teams including the East Christchurch Football Club and the University of Canterbury Rugby Football Club are also recorded in the Domains Board Minutes as occupying space within both North and South Hagley Park for varying periods during this time.

In 1883, a number of cricket groups that had formerly played on the Canterbury Cricket Association grounds were granted dedicated grounds of their own in South Hagley Park.²⁶⁹ Similarly, Christ's College, which had been occupying unsuitable pitches “*bedevilled by tussock*” near what would become Victoria Lake, were granted an area of eight acres adjoining the Hagley Park Cricket Ground in 1886. Construction of their pavilion followed in 1888 and soon after this a groundsman's cottage was erected on the cricket grounds²⁷⁰ (figure 3.17).

Other users of North Hagley Park included the Pioneer Bicycle and Amateur Athletic Club, a newly-formed cycle club that had grown out of the cycling boom gripping Christchurch at this time. The club held its first championship cycle meet in February 1880 with one, four and ten mile bicycle competition races across the Park.²⁷¹ However it was not until 1897 that recreational cycling through the Park was officially sanctioned by the Domains Board, with the formation of a tar and sand cycleway. Initiated by the Christchurch Cycle Association, and under the supervision of an engineer, eighteen-inch-wide tracks were laid either side of the existing footpath leading through Hagley Park from the Armagh Street Bridge to the Fendalton Bridge.²⁷² By 1901 this cycle track and footpath combination, together with a number of other footpaths, had been erased, their loss the consequence of the Royal Visit and the Military Review.



Figure 3.17. Christ's College cricket pavilion, South Hagley Park (undated)
Source: *The Christ's College Sports Register*, February 1897, frontispiece.

²⁶⁹ This included the Hagley Oak Leaf Club, the Working Men's Club and the Railway Cricket Club who occupied areas in South Hagley Park at various times

²⁷⁰ Hamilton, D. (1991) *The Buildings of Christ's College 1850-1990*, p. 32

²⁷¹ *The Star*, 27 February 1880, p. 3; *The Press*, 25 May 1911, p. 18

²⁷² *The Star*, 1 December 1897, p. 3

Both North and South Hagley Park were popular venues for school fêtes where “*games of every variety of juvenile taste*” were played, as well as other more adult amusements including Popular Sports Association events from 1878.²⁷³ This group was responsible for levelling sand hills to form a quarter-mile oval running track, sinking an artesian well and adapting the natural terrain of North Hagley Park to form a grass-covered viewing terrace.²⁷⁴

The Association ensured the popularity of its regular athletic fêtes with a range of attractions as well as sports. Confectioners and publicans erected tents, and a luncheon booth, a dancing booth and fruit stalls enlivened and diversified the proceedings.²⁷⁵ A temporary grandstand was constructed for those who did not wish to share the terrace with the general public, and folk games such as blind-folded three-legged races, tug of war and wheelbarrow races offered alternative entertainment to the standard track and field contests and occasional bicycle races.²⁷⁶ The popularity of these sporting events peaked in the early 1880s, with a crowd of over 7,000 spectators attending a sports meeting in 1882.²⁷⁷

Popular sports events continued to be held in North Hagley Park until at least 1890. At that point, crowds diminished to such an extent that the sporting festivals were no longer economic to organise and the events were terminated. The grounds used by the Association for their events were part of the greater area leased from the Domains Board by Mr P. Elder, and the saddling paddock for the event was close to the College Bridge.²⁷⁸

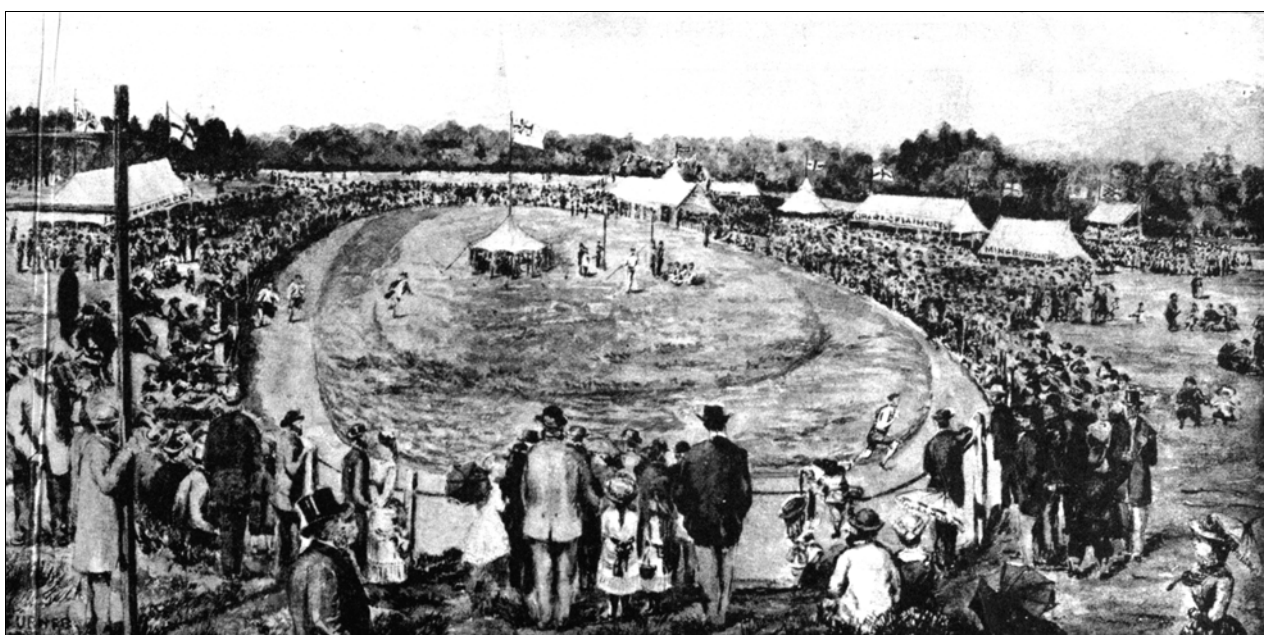


Figure 3.18. The Popular Sports Association Anniversary day event in 1883, North Hagley Park (clipped image)
Source: George Turner painting published in *The Weekly Press*, 26 December 1900
Costley collection, Ref 1967.176.12 CMDRC

²⁷³ Prior to 1878 the Popular Sports Association utilised Latimer Square for its events

²⁷⁴ *The Star*, 26 November 1878, p. 3

²⁷⁵ *The Star*, 1 December 1880, p. 3

²⁷⁶ *Lyttelton Times*, 9 December 1878; *Lyttelton Times Supplement*, 17 December 1878;

²⁷⁷ *Grey River Argus*, 18 December 1881, p. 4

²⁷⁸ *The Star*, 8 December 1883, p. 4

As spectator interest in the Popular Sports events waned, the new sport of lacrosse offered an alternative for sideline entertainment. The Canterbury Lacrosse Club held its first match in South Hagley Park in 1888 on the United Cricket Club's pitch in South Hagley. However, player and spectator interest in the sport quickly dissipated in favour of football.²⁷⁹

By the late 1870s, use by these groups and other sporting bodies had transformed significant parts of both North and South Hagley Parks into level and grassed playing fields, and pedestrian access had been greatly improved with the construction of a number of footpaths. However, much of the Park remained in an unimproved state and, viewed through the eyes of one English visitor in 1880, it still contrasted sharply with English parks. *"Beyond the gardens lies what is called Hagley 'Park', but this is surely a misnomer for an enclosure composed of bare sand-heaps and a stretch of grassland full of holes and ridges. These have no charm for the visitor..."*²⁸⁰ Seven years later, however, Hagley Park was documented in more favourable terms and much was made of the transformation from its former somewhat bleak-looking appearance into what was described as a scene of great beauty. *"The walk round the parks from Armagh Bridge, up the bank of the river, round by Riccarton, across the road to the cricket grounds and South Park, and back by the river bank, or through the lovely Domain, is one that for sylvan beauty cannot be surpassed."*²⁸¹

The growth of both Enoch Barker's and the Armstrong's plantings, the recent clearing of obstructions from the Avon River, and the discontinuation of cropping in favour of the cultivation of 'English grass' certainly contributed to this favourable view. In addition, by 1887, a growing network of tree canopied paths crossed North Hagley Park in various directions, and new kissing, hunting, wicket, cradle and field gates had been constructed around the perimeter of the Park to improve horse and pedestrian access. An impressive (extant) College (Armagh Street West) Bridge, complete with decorative cast-iron tracery, strengthened the sense of entrance into North Hagley Park and grazing sheep furthered the pastoral aesthetic.

To the north of North Hagley Park a tow strip reserve bordered both sides of the Avon River. Originally set aside for the use of barges to ferry goods into the city from Lyttelton and Heathcote, the reserve was maintained by Christchurch Council until 1876. At this time, part of the reserve was acquired by Joseph C. Helmore, a prominent Christchurch solicitor, in a land exchange that saw him give up some of his land for Helmore's Road (now Helmore's Lane). This became known variously as Helmore's or the Helmore Plantation. Helmore was a keen tree planter and filled his property with an impressive collection of exotics. He is also recorded as having appropriated 150 willows and poplars from the Government plantations to tree his riverbank and ornament the approach to the bridge he had constructed two years earlier.²⁸²

Hagley Park Meteorological Station

In 1876 the General Government relocated their Christchurch Meteorological Station from its original position near the government buildings to a new location in North Hagley Park, approximately 100 yards from the College Bridge. Described as a small box resembling a dovecote mounted on a fourteen-foot high post, the station was equipped with maximum and minimum wet and dry thermometers, a solar and terrestrial radiation barometer, wind, rain and evaporation

²⁷⁹ *The Press*, 20 April 1888, p. 4; *The Press*, 30 April 1888, p. 6

²⁸⁰ *The Star*, 30 September 1880, p. 3

²⁸¹ *The Star*, 3 November 1887, p. 3

²⁸² Armstrong to Secretary Public Works 20/9/1867. CAAR 19946 CH287 CP213 ICPW1356/1867, ANZ

gauges, a barometer cistern and an ozonometer. This was part of a standardized system of recording that had been introduced by the Government in 1868.²⁸³

Attempted encroachments in the Park

By 1889 the practices of the Domains Board concerning leases were under fire from certain members of the public who argued that Hagley Park was a place of recreation for people of all classes. The Board, it was claimed was, to some degree, alienating portions of the Park by allowing clubhouses, caretaker's accommodation and fences to be erected.²⁸⁴ This concern over the exclusive use of the Park by minority groups was heightened by several attempts to excise land from Hagley Park during this period. The first of these was a stymied bid by Riccarton residents to have a carriage drive laid through the centre of North Hagley Park in 1868. This was promoted by its proponents as having twin benefits – being a pleasant carriage drive between Riccarton Road and Armagh Street and a convenient link between Riccarton and the city. The scheme was seen by many as promoting the interests of a small sector of the community, and the proposal was defeated through a voting process in which 400 residents voted against the drive and 300 voted for it. At the time it was noted that the matter of such a road had been raised previously but had always been rejected by both the public and the Provincial Council. The public, it was said had once again “gathered for the purpose of preventing aggression on Hagley Park.”²⁸⁵

Ten years later a plan to subdivide a strip of land, two and a half chains wide, around the outside of the western boundary of the Park from the Carlton Bridge to the Acclimatisation Grounds, caused a minor furore. The land was to be leased in half-acre sections for 50 years and the city was to receive the rental. The plan was endorsed by the Mayor and a number of council members who saw it as an opportunity to convert Hagley Park from “a sheep walk into a magnificent landscape.” However, the proposal was short-lived in the face of public opposition which was trenchantly against any sort of interference in Hagley Park.²⁸⁶

The International Industrial Exhibition

In 1882 South Hagley Park was the venue for an International Industrial Exhibition organised by entrepreneurs Jules Joubert and Richard Twopenny. The site occupied by the exhibition was approximately four and a half acres on the eastern corner of South Hagley Park, in the angle formed by Riccarton Road (Riccarton Avenue) and Lincoln Road (Hagley Avenue). Within this space the exhibition building was positioned parallel to Lincoln Road, with its main entrance nearly aligned with St Asaph Street. The south-west side of the building lay immediately to the north of what was then the Addington Cricket Club's boundary²⁸⁷ and the building's footprint extended 678 feet in length (Hagley Avenue side) and 282 feet in width.²⁸⁸

Two main entrances were formed for carriage drive access, each half a chain in width. The first was described as being on Riccarton Road about a chain from the Riccarton Road/Lincoln Road corner,

²⁸³ *The Star*, 25 May 1876, p. 2

²⁸⁴ *The Star*, 12 November 1889, p. 4

²⁸⁵ *The Press*, 19 November 1868, p. 2

²⁸⁶ Sharrocks, A. (1980) *Hagley Park: conflict, decision-making and changing perceptions in public open space*, pp. 75-79

²⁸⁷ *The Star*, 19 January 1882, p. 3; *West Coast Times*, 25 January 1882, p. 2

²⁸⁸ For a full description of the exhibition building see *The Star*, 23 January 1882, p. 3 and the *Evening Post*, 11 April 1882, p. 4

and the second entrance was formed on Hagley Avenue opposite St Asaph Street and necessitated the construction of a bridge across a drain. Following the exhibition, this bridge was purchased by the promoters of the horse ride for use on the Rotten Row. Other earthworks associated with the exhibition involved the cutting of drains and the laying of permanent drainage pipes.²⁸⁹

Newspaper reports documenting the development of the exhibition site describe the ceremonial laying of a foundation stone by the Christchurch Mayor and note that “copies of the local newspapers were placed in a sealed jar and deposited in the receptacle, together with the following inscription on parchment:-New Zealand International Exhibition. Promoters- Jules Joubert, Esq. Richard E. N. Twopeny. Esq. W. R. Mitchell, agent for New Zealand. This foundation stone was laid by J. G. Ruddenklau, Esq., Mayor of the City of Christchurch, on the 30th day of January, 1882. T. S. Lambert, Esq., architect. H. Carmichael and Son, contractors.”²⁹⁰ Attempts to trace both the foundation stone and the time capsule have been unsuccessful.

Calls to retain the exhibition building as a “Palace of Delight” did not find favour with the Domains Board and, following the exhibition's closure in July 1882, all construction materials, parts of the main structure, fixtures, fittings and artworks were auctioned. By September 1882 the last vestige of the buildings had been removed and five of its six ornamental fountains had been razed from the site, using charges of blasting powder. However, one fountain was left intact on the site where the main building had been positioned.²⁹¹ This was variously described by *The Star* as a “memento” and “memorial” of the exhibition and was said to serve the purpose that Mr Joubert intended to be fulfilled by the foundation stone.²⁹² No information concerning the fountain's removal or relocation has been located.

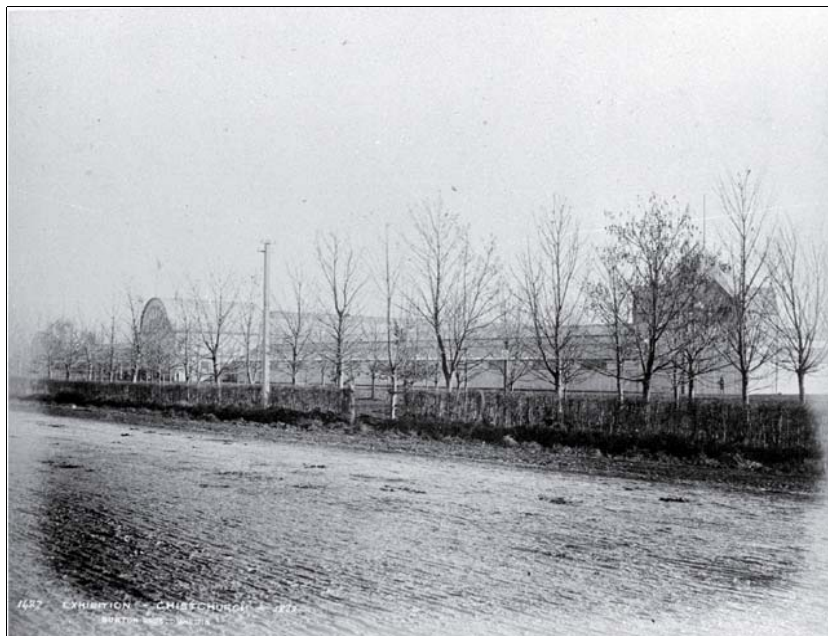


Figure 3.19. Postcard view of the main exhibition building from Lincoln Road (Hagley Avenue)

Source: PhotoCD 1, IMG00013, CCL

²⁸⁹ *New Zealand Tablet*, 3 February 1882, p. 11; *The Star*, 24 August 1882, p. 3

²⁹⁰ *The Star*, 31 January 1882, p. 3; Exhibition Sports Committee Scrapbook 1882, CH343/75b, CCHA

²⁹¹ *The Star*, 20 September 1882, p. 3

²⁹² *Ibid*; *The Star*, 27 September 1882, p. 2

HAGLEY PARK AND GOVT DOMAIN, 1889

Improvements



Above: College Bridge and Hagley Park, March 1880
Source: O.027000, MNZ

Period Quote

"Business of all kinds has been entirely suspended to-day, the Kaitangata fete engaging the attention of all classes of the community, from the Mayor downwards. Englishmen are not apt to throw off their shell of reserve, but when they do apparently it is with a vengeance... The start of the procession for the cricket ground was made from Gloucester-street at twelve noon. The procession formed was made up as follows Mounted men in armor, band, Mayor and officers of the City Council, ex-Councillors, &c, Fire Brigade, Seager Dramatic Company, Odd Fellows, Mephistopheles and Satellites, Foresters, Druids, King of Pain, H.A.C.B. Society Band, Members of the Muff Cricket Match Association. Mr. Hulbert made a most efficient marshal in chain armor, with Mr. Alport as trumpeter in ordinary. The procession passed along Colombo-street, High-street, Cashel-street, and so to the Hagley Park cricket ground, where the stumps for the muff cricket match were pitched. Here also were numbers of refreshment booths, and places of amusement in large numbers. The principal attraction was a canvas theatre... Other excitements were the show containing the two-legged foal and the eight-legged lamb; Miss Andrew's fortune telling; Mr. Mc Leary's plate-spinning entertainment; Mr. Seager's corps de ballet, performing the Maypole dance; a dwarf sixteen inches; and Professor Scott's omnium gatherum. A very large number of people it is stated were on the ground, and the weather was agreeable, though slightly dull, and at 3 o'clock there were about 15,000 people present, and the fete was at its height..." Evening Post, 18 March 1878, p. 3



Key

1. Avenue of Spanish chestnuts with Pinus radiata nurse trees
2. Row of Sequoiadendron giganteum from the Avon River to Riccarton Road
3. Rotten Row saddle ride from Carlton Hotel to Riccarton Hotel
4. Avenue of "rare Californian pines" with nurse pines
5. Helmore's plantation adjacent to Helmore's Bridge
6. Avenue of Lime with nurse Pinus radiata
7. Maori Reserve planted with pines
8. Pine clump – mixed pines, Cupressus spp., larch and Sequoiadendron giganteum
9. Meteorological station on 14 ft high post
10. Replanted belt of English elm with nurse pines
11. General location of exotic economic nursery and Caretaker's cottage
12. Cupressus macrocarpa avenue
13. Riccarton Hotel
14. Bathing place with changing shed, steps to river and substantial fence
15. New College Bridge
16. Plantation of oak, sycamore, birch and chestnut
17. Pine clump

Note: Density of tree planting is indicative only and should not be taken as a true record of tree spacing or numbers

Sources

Map of Christchurch, Canterbury compiled from data supplied to City Council and Drainage Board, MapColl 834.4492a, 1877 3158, ATL
 Christchurch Domain Board Letter Book 1873-1888, CH343/133b, CCCA
 Christchurch Domain Board – No. 1 Album, CH343/80c, CCCA
 Duff, G. (1981) *The History of the Botanic Gardens and Hagley Park*
 Hamilton, D. (1991) *The Building of Christ's College 1850-1990*
The Gardener's Chronicle, Volume 22, August 1884
 Reports of the Canterbury Acclimatisation Society. AEQH 21352 CH1002 Box 37/b, ANZ
 Plans for cottage and propagating house 1872. CAAR 19946 CH287 CP239 ICPW 453/1872, ANZ
The Star, 23 May 1874; *The Star*, 22 April 1875; *The Star*; 12 October 1875
The Press, 23 October 1871; *The Press*, 8 February 1872
The Star, 9 December 1873; *The Daily Southern Cross*, 10 January 1874
The Star, 16 June 1885; *The Press*, 25 September 1897
 Plan of Hagley park shewing proposed rides, Sept 1882 MapColl-834.4492gbbg/1882/Acc.39356, ATL
 River Avon, Christchurch 3rd March 1880, Ref: O.027000, Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa
 Aerial imagery courtesy of Google Maps

Figure 3.20
Map of Hagley Park and the Government Domain 1889