

5.2.1 UC1 Area A Church Hill (Level 2)

Description

The two churches, St Andrew's and Christ Church, which give this area its name and particularly their spires are Hamilton's most important landmarks. They stand at the top of the highest land in the district which was chosen for that reason by design or, more likely, by market forces as the premier residential area in Hamilton. The land falls away to the Grange Burn on two sides and the saddle which forms the commercial centre of Hamilton. On the north west side the land was flat and swampy. This preference for the high ground was characteristic of all nineteenth century development and was based for a long time on the belief in the Miasmatic theory for the spread of disease.

The regular street grid dominates the Church Hill area. It is bisected by Gray Street and McIntyre Street which keep to the highest ground and intersect at the highest point. The grid is unified by established street tree planting some of which has been removed over the years. The trees are varied but consist mostly of *Ulmus X hollandica*, elms, and the best avenue of these is in McIntyre Street. They are possibly oldest street trees in Hamilton but drastic pruning over the years prevents a conclusive dating. Other candidates would be the *Crataegus laevigata*, the English Hawthorn (now declared to be a noxious weed!), in French Street between McIntyre and Carmichael Streets. Also important are the *Brachychiton populneus*, Kurrajongs, and *Eucalyptus ficifolia*, Red Flowering Gum, as examples of native species used as late nineteenth century street trees. In Gray Street there are *Platanus X acerifolius*, Planes, which from their size, condition and documentary evidence date from the early twentieth century. Post World War 2 there were plantings of much smaller trees of quite different species. For a detailed list of trees see Appendix 8.6.

The foot paths are all paved with concrete and usually only on one side of the street. The further reaches of the cross streets, when they dip down to the Grange Burn, are not paved. The grass nature strips vary in width from one to five metres. Typically for residential areas of mostly twentieth century construction the footpaths are crossed by driveways most of which are concrete. The

gutters are also mostly concrete but some of bluestone cobbles survive. The best examples of the latter are, of course, in the older parts such as McIntyre Street between Gray and Griffin Streets. The streets are happily empty of much of the paraphernalia found in metropolitan suburbs. For a detailed list of materials see Appendix 8.7.

The most common building type is the free standing house, either early twentieth century villas or interwar bungalows. Some older houses and cottages survive either relatively intact or else substantially altered, so much so that their early date is hard to distinguish. There is a wide variety of styles from all periods. There is a wide variety of size with the largest and most impressive houses clustered around the churches and in the two main streets. That is not to say that there are no houses of interest in the other streets. In fact the uniformly distributed significant buildings focused on the church complexes make this an area of real importance to the City of Hamilton. Lyndhurst at 4 McIntyre Street plays a similar role for the southern end of the area.

The Church Hill area leads on to the Gray Street Commercial Area. Certain buildings line its phalanx and play a critical role in defining the edge. The most important of these is the group around the former Temperance Hall in Kennedy Street. Further south it melds with the Botanic Gardens area. The views out of the Church Hill area which are generated by the grid, are critical to its character. From McIntyre Street, at about the intersection of French Street, there is a view to the south-east of machinery sheds, dumped cars and poor quality development across the Grange Burn on the hill opposite. Power lines also intrude on the view. From Skene Street and from Clarke Street there are views to the south-west of the Council Depot and the Abattoirs. The City of Hamilton should encourage good planting on these sites and, if it owns the land, should do screen planting itself. The best species for this would be indigenous flora collected from the area. One good view is to the south-west from Gray Street which has open fields and rows of trees on the horizon.

History

As in other Victoria country towns, church organisations (beginning with the Anglicans and the Presbyterians) were formed in Hamilton at an early date and had a profound effect on the community life of the region. The fine

buildings with their spires and towers constructed for these congregations have made a great impact architecturally and aesthetically and have led to the whole area being designated as Church Hill. (275) It is one of the most prestigious locations in Hamilton and an important component of its heritage.

Ecclesiastical buildings on Church Hill include Christ Church Co-Cathedral, commenced in 1878 by the Ballarat architect, H.R. Caselli (276), and the nearby manse (1897-8) at 26 Gray Street. (277) The architects Clegg and Miller designed St Andrew's Presbyterian Church in 1909, which stands at 20 Gray Street. (278) A third congregation, the Wesleyan Methodists, dissatisfied with an original grant of land, purchased a more prestigious Church Hill site at 41 McIntyre Street, where they built an early church in 1862 designed by the Melbourne architects, Crouch and Wilson. In 1913, this building was sold and converted into a private residence. (279)

Church Hill became the focus for Hamilton's leading business and professional men, anxious to build elegant homes on elevated sites. There are a number of surviving Edwardian residences which exemplify this trend, including the home of F F L Gummow, auctioneer, at 18 McIntyre Street (1904) and the solicitor, Saxon H Palmer's residence at 4 McIntyre Street (1902) (280)

It is hardly surprising that Church Hill was chosen for the prestigious Hamilton Club, built in 1879 from the designs of Smith and Johnson for leading townsmen and Western District pastoralists and graziers at 41 Gray Street. (281)

Statement of Significance

The Church Hill Area is of regional significance as a precinct where major Hamilton religious buildings were located, most notably Christ Church Co Cathedral and its manse, and St Andrew's Presbyterian Church. It has also been regarded as the most prestigious residential part of

- 275 *Argus*, 28 March 1885.
- 276 *Garden*, p 82.
- 277 *BEMJ*, 20 February 1897.
- 278 *Garden*, p 170.
- 279 *Garden*, *passim*.
- 280 *Ibid.*, p 172.
- 281 *Ibid.*, p 84.

the town and contains a number of examples of elegant residences built for leading business and professional men, as well as retired squatters. The residential character is reinforced by gardens, several notable trees and important street tree planting. It is the social focus for prominent townsmen and Western District pastoralists and graziers.

Recommendations

To conserve and enhance the special character of the Church Hill area it is recommended that:

- i the existing street plantings which date from before the Second world War be retained and extended in a comparable manner,
- ii traditional paving and guttering continue to be used including the absence of footpaths in some streets,
- iii a strict policy of minimal signage be followed,
- iv no non-residential uses should be allowed to compromise the essentially residential character of the area,
- v wherever possible the intrusion of powerlines should be minimised if they cannot be removed,
- vi the views out of the area should be enhanced by appropriate planting.

5.2.2 UC1 Area B Botanic Gardens (Level 2)

Description

The Botanic Gardens is the focus of this area which is also dominated by the regularity of the street grid. It is surrounded by mostly residential buildings and their gardens acting in support and as a buffer from the rest of the city. The major exception is the group of public buildings, especially the Court House, and the Evangelical Lutheran Church complex. Certain residential buildings stand out, specifically the former Police Magistrate's house at 24 Thompson Street, Kilara, the Napier Club, and The Gables. The latter two being two-storied are particularly dominant but they are still subservient to the fully mature trees of the Gardens.