

11. COMMEMORATION OF MR ANDREW JOHNSON

Officer responsible Parks and Waterways Manager	Author Warwick Scadden, Parks & Waterways Area Advocate, DDI 941-6614
---	---

The purpose of this report is to recognise the contribution of Andrew Johnson to the heritage of Christchurch and in particular the Radley community. Furthermore, the option of rescinding a decision made by the Board on 4 June 1997 would correct an erroneous situation that has occurred.

INTRODUCTION

Andrew Johnson was an inaugural member of the Acclimatisation Society, being appointed curator in 1864 to the newly established society, which was based at that time in Hagley Park.

In 1875 Andrew Johnson established Troutdale Farm on a block of land bounded by Clarendon Terrace, and Sheldon, Radley and Marshall Streets, measuring approximately 1.7 hectares. The area included what is now Radley Playground. For nearly 60 years, until 1933, the grounds of Mr Johnson's property were a meeting place to enjoy picnics and entertainment. The property became known as "Johnson's Fishponds", due to the extensive aquarium and ponds together with the large number and variety of fish. In the latter years, the property was noted for its outdoor skating rink and various other outdoor entertainments.

In 1925, Charles Morris, who had been Johnson's caretaker, purchased the property and shortly after disposed of several lots for residential purposes, with one lot of approximately 800m² being transferred to the Council for recreation purposes. The major portion of the land was sold to Mr Bobby Brims, who restored various run down facilities and continued to operate the property as a public resort until its closure in 1933.

In 1942, it appears that the then State Advances Corporation purchased at least part of the property owned by Brims for housing purposes. The Corporation then exchanged a portion of its land believed to be the present site of Radley Playground, for the smaller lot of 800m² owned by the Council.

At the Board meeting on 4 June 1997, a report was discussed concerning Radley Park and Radley Playground. This report is attached.

At that meeting the decision was made to rename Radley Playground as McCombs Playground, and it appears that at that time no community consultation had been undertaken. Since that date the name of the playground has remained as Radley Playground, with the playground signage being maintained unchanged.

DISCUSSION

It is clear that Mr Andrew Johnson was a notable person for his knowledge and efforts in introducing various fish species into New Zealand during last century.

It is also evident he was a public minded person who was prepared to share his interests and develop and manage facilities which for many years were a noted attraction in Christchurch.

There is also no question that the site of Radley Playground was once part of Mr Johnson's property. Similarly, there is no doubt that Mr & Mrs James McCombs had an association with this area, in respect of their interest in the welfare of children.

However, as stated in the report of 4 June 1997, recognition of Mr & Mrs McCombs and respect for their community standing resulted in the existence of the McCombs Memorial Garden on the Richardson Terrace frontage of Woolston Park.

SUMMARY

Radley Playground is sited on land with a rich history of former fishponds, picnic grounds and entertainment areas.

There is nothing on the site to recognise this history, either in the name of the playground or information boards.

While recognising the interest in the welfare of children by Mr & Mrs James McCombs, the memorial garden in Woolston Park affords due recognition.

Given that despite the Board's decision of 4 June 1997 to rename Radley Playground, this renaming has not taken place, and this playground is appropriate for a suitable commemoration to Mr Andrew Johnson.

Staff

- Recommendations:**
1. That the Hagley/Ferrymead Community Board decision of 4 June 1997 be rescinded.
 2. That the playground be renamed Johnson's Playground.
 3. That an information board be erected in the playground incorporating details of Andrew Johnson's work and former site features.

Chairperson's

Recommendation: That the recommendations be adopted.