

McCAHON HOUSE
67 OTITORI BAY ROAD
TITIRANGI



CONSERVATION PLAN
2003

BURGESS AND TREP ARCHITECTS

INTRODUCTION

The house at 67 Otitori Bay Road was built as a weekend cottage following the purchase of the land by Herbert Harpour in 1939. The legal title of the property is Lot 11 DP17297 portion of allotments 242a, 410 and 412 Parish of Waikomiti (Certificate of Title 723/55). The property measures 1034 square metres.

In 1953 Colin McCahon bought the property and the painter and his family lived here until 1960. During this time McCahon carried out numerous projects on the property. The changes he made to the house were largely left in place by Ms Jacqueline Amoamo, who lived there from 1960 until 1999.

This report has been commissioned by Waitakere City Council, and the McCahon House Trust. The conservation plan is intended as the first stage in a process to establish the significance of a place. It gives guidance as to how the place can be retained and maintained. It is a document that tells the story of the place and recommends policies which will ensure appropriate care and use.

METHODOLOGY

This document is based on *The Conservation Plan: A Guide to the Preparation of Conservation Plans for Places of European Cultural Heritage Significance*, National Trust (N.S.W.), 1990, by James Semple Kerr, and on the principles and practices set out in the *ICOMOS New Zealand Charter For The Conservation Of Places Of Cultural Heritage Value*, 1995, and the *NZHPT Guidelines for the Preparation of Conservation Plans*, 1994.

This document is intended to provide as full as possible a record of the building and site, as it stands, from readily available primary and secondary historical sources, a survey of it's present state, and from the recollections of those associated with the house during the 1950's.

The conservation plan is in two sections: Cultural Significance, and Conservation Policy.

Part One: Cultural Significance, establishes the history of the place, it's relationship to broader events, and how the building contributes to the understanding of the place and community. This is summarized in the "Statement of Cultural Significance" at the end of the section.

Part Two : Conservation Policy, is intended as a management tool to guide the future development and care of 67 Otitori Bay Road, in a manner which will retain and reinforce the significance of the building. The policies are also intended to allow for the building to be restored to community use, if this is possible, and to provide guidance as to how this can best be done.

SUMMARY

- Colin McCahon and his family lived at 67 Otitori Bay Road from 1953-1960.
- McCahon, himself, carried out the idiosyncratic alterations to the cottage which predominantly remain as he built them.
- McCahon painted in the house, on the deck and in the garage (e.g. *the Northland Panels*, and *the Wake*).
- The period (1953-1960) was one of significant transition in McCahon's art, its style and subject matter.
- The house was a gathering place for many of New Zealand's leading artists and literary figures during the time the McCahons lived there.
- McCahon is acknowledged internationally as New Zealand's greatest modern painter.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF TITIRANGI AS A SUBURB

During the early period of European settlement of West Auckland, forestry was the primary industry for the area. Timber exports from the Waitakere Ranges began in 1836¹.

Mixed farms were established on the cleared land. Titirangi remained a small settlement until well into the twentieth century.² Few farms survived the difficult years of the First World War; farm labour was scarce and untended farms quickly reverted to bush.³ As farming declined, Aucklanders discovered a new interest in the scenic beauty of the Waitakere Ranges. During the early years of the twentieth century few tourists had made their way into the hills beyond Titirangi. The roads into the ranges remained poor until the 1930's when the construction of Scenic Drive provided the first all-weather road through the ranges.⁴

After the First World war several of the properties around Titirangi were subdivided. This included a block of land on South Titirangi Road (then known as School Road). It was subdivided in the 1920's into two acre lots and advertised for auction:

'MAGNIFICENT SITES, with unexcelled panorama of THE MANUKAU HARBOUR, THE CITY, THE WAITEMATA AND THE HAURAKI GULF...

Fern and Forest-clad Hills with deep water frontage to Manukau Harbour...

SUMMER HOMES in the Kauri Forest....

MAGNIFICENT FISHING, BOATING and BATHING'⁵

In 1919 nearby land had been subdivided into 70 one acre lots. This was part of the 300 acre Atkinson Estate that was subdivided and sold during the early twentieth century.⁶ The 1919 subdivision was bounded by Otitori Bay and Tanekaha Roads on the west, and Wood Bay Road to the east. Roads were also surveyed in through the land block.⁷ By October 1923 thirteen of the allotments, which had failed to sell, were further subdivided. These sites on Otitori Bay Road and Valley Road were divided into 37 allotments measuring just over one rood each.⁸

During this period Titirangi, and the Waitakeres beyond, were promoted as a playground for Aucklanders. The Titirangi Hotel opened in the late 1920's adding to the holiday feel of the area.⁹ However, the Titirangi subdivisions were slow to sell. Several of the one acre lots

¹ Auckland Regional Council, *Regional parks Winter News: Centennial Memorial Park Golden Jubilee Edition 1940-1990*, p.5 and Janice R Drain, *Changing Man-Environment Relationships in the Titirangi Area*, unpublished research essay, University of Auckland, 1990, p.88

² Essie Hodge, 'Early Titirangi', James Northcote Bade, ed., *West Auckland Remembers*, Auckland, 1990, p.88.

³ Ibid., p.91.

⁴ Jeanne Wade, *Song of Two Waters: An Early History of Waikarua*, Auckland, 1979, p.47.

⁵ Titirangi sections to be sold at auction, Auckland Public Library, Special Collections, NZ Maps 3725.

⁶ Certificate of Title, 126/27, Land Information New Zealand, Auckland.

⁷ Deposited Plan 13120, Land Information New Zealand, Auckland.

⁸ Deposited Plan 17297, Land Information New Zealand, Auckland.

⁹ Carol Sinkinson, ed., *Titirangi Primary School 1872-1997*, n.d., n.p., p.7.

from the original 1919 subdivision remained unsold in 1930. Similarly the 1923 subdivision failed to take off. By 1930 only 28 of the 37 sites had been purchased.¹⁰ In 1935, Otitori Bay Road had nine heads of households listed in *Cleave's Auckland Provincial Directory*. Amongst those listed were a manager, nurse, boarding house-keeper, agent and a master mariner.¹¹

Titirangi had grown with the influx of population occasioned by the subdivisions following the First World War. However, improvements to roads and services were slow to come. As late as 1944 there were only four and a half miles of sealed roads in Titirangi and virtually no footpaths.¹² This situation improved over the years and travel to and from the city became much easier. The Titirangi of the 1950's earned the description: 'a sprinkling of raffish cottages, the hideaway homes of society's casualties and the weekend baches of city dwellers.'¹³

Lot 11 on Otitori Bay Road was part of the 1923 subdivision. Measuring one rood, the site sold in 1939 to Herbert Godfrey Harpour. It is likely that Harpour built the small bach on the site soon after his purchase of the land.¹⁴ The dwelling was one of several baches nestled in the bush in an area which became known as a 'sylvan slum'.¹⁵ In 1950 it was purchased by retired hairdresser Albert Mason and his wife Matilda. Three years later Colin McCahon purchased the property.¹⁶

¹⁰Certificate of Title 377/188, Land Information New Zealand, Auckland.

¹¹*Cleave's Auckland Provincial Directory*, 1935-1936, p.226.

¹²Drain, p.8.

¹³Dick Scott, *Fire on the Clay: The Pakeha Comes to West Auckland*, Auckland, 1979, p.194.

¹⁴Certificate of Title 723/55, Land Information New Zealand, Auckland.

¹⁵Scott, p.194, quoting E.H. McCormack.

¹⁶Certificate of Title 723/55, Land Information New Zealand, Auckland.

1.2 COLIN McCAHON- THE TITIRANGI YEARS

McCahon was born in August 1919 in Timaru, the son of a commercial traveller and grandson of William Ferrier the photographer and landscape painter. He grew up in Dunedin and Oamaru and attended Otago Boy's High School and then Dunedin School of Art. In 1942 he married Anne Hamblett, daughter of Archdeacon W.A. Hamblett. Anne was a promising young artist who had been awarded with scholarships and prizes during her time at Dunedin Art School. In 1943 the couple moved to Nelson. They subsequently lived in Dunedin and Christchurch. By 1949 Anne and Colin had a family of four children, William, Catherine, Victoria and Matthew. They were desperately poor and Anne began working as an illustrator to supplement the family income.¹⁷

In 1953 Colin McCahon met Eric Westbrook, director of the Auckland City Art Gallery. McCahon gained the impression that there was a job available for him at the gallery. On the strength of this he moved to Auckland in May 1953. It transpired that the only job available for McCahon was a cleaner at the gallery, a position he readily accepted.¹⁸ McCahon bought the house at 67 Otitori Bay Road and the family moved to their new home in Titirangi. The house was small and primitive. Money was tight and for the first month the McCahons lived 'almost entirely on a diet of potatoes, parsley, and bags of rock-cakes given by a kind and ancient aunt.'¹⁹



Butler's Store & Village Hall 1950s-Photo Gerhardt Rosenberg

¹⁷*Otago Daily Times*, 11 January 1994, p.5 and 24 August 2000, C17; John Caselberg, 'Havens for Art: Nelson, Dunedin and the Growth of Local Art', *Art New Zealand*, Vol. 15, p.48, and Claudia Orange, ed., *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, Vol. 5, 1941-1960, Wellington, 2000, pp.303-305.

¹⁸Gordon H. Brown, *Colin McCahon: Artist*, Wellington, 1984, p.51.

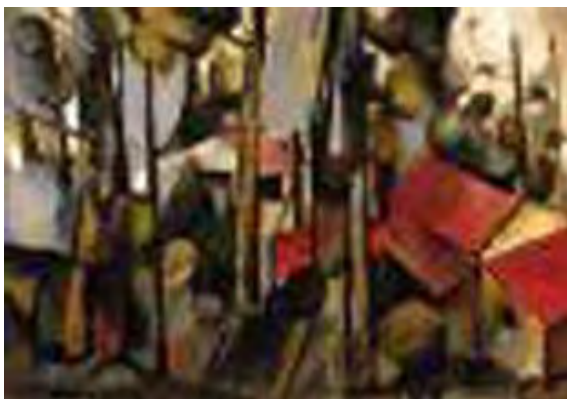
¹⁹Draft catalogue, Folder 1, McCahon artists file, E.H. McCormick Research Library, Auckland City Art Gallery, p.7.



The Shops in Titirangi 1950s-Photo Gerhardt Rosenberg

Their new house bore little resemblance to the home they left behind in Barbour Street, Christchurch. McCahon would later describe the Barbour Street property as: ‘A place almost without night and day as the super floodlights of the [neighbouring] railway goods-yards kept us in perpetual light.’²⁰

The Titirangi home was located in bush, far from the city lights. It was a basic bach. The minute kitchen doubled as the entry lobby. A small lean-to area to the north of the kitchen was the laundry, bathroom and dining area. To the other side of the kitchen was a living room with an alcoved porch off it beside the fireplace. The house was on town supply water and had electricity. Toilet facilities consisted of a bucket (a *casako* can) in a corner under the house for the women and open-air facilities for the males of the family. The children in this early period slept in the lean-to area of the living room; Colin & Anne slept in the tiny porch.²¹



Colin McCahon Painting - Kauri 1953

McCahon’s work progressed during his time at Titirangi. He was delighted by the unique quality of his new surroundings. He wrote:

²⁰Ibid., p.4.

²¹Personal communication with William McCahon 1 July 2003, Victoria & Catherine McCahon 2 Oct. 2003.

‘The November light for that first year was a miracle. . . After the south, the drenching rain and brilliant sun, that shattered clouds after thunder and the rainbows that looped over the city and harbour through the Auckland light . . .’²²



Colin McCahon, Rear Garden Titirangi 1953

The bus trip from Titirangi to Auckland was a catalyst for McCahon’s paintings of the ‘Towards Auckland’ series. He wrote:

‘I went in and out of Auckland on the bus every day and the painting is done from the bus, but at home, remembering how the hills looked from the bush window as I went to work each morning.’²³



Figure 1 : Colin McCahon, Towards Auckland, 1954.

In 1955 McCahon applied for a building consent to improve living conditions at the house. The plans show a new bedroom at the eastern end of the house and a storage room under the house, a loose interpretation of what was actually built.²⁴ McCahon sold the ‘Towards

²²Draft catalogue, Folder 1, McCahon artists file, E.H. McCormick Research Library, Auckland City Art Gallery, p.8.

²³Quoted in Brown, p.53.

²⁴ Waitemata County Council permit 2648, Waitakere City Council.

Auckland' series in order to 'pay for house alterations and so on just to cope with the sizes the children were becoming.'²⁵ All this work was carried out by McCahon with assistance from friends, Peter Webb in particular.²⁶

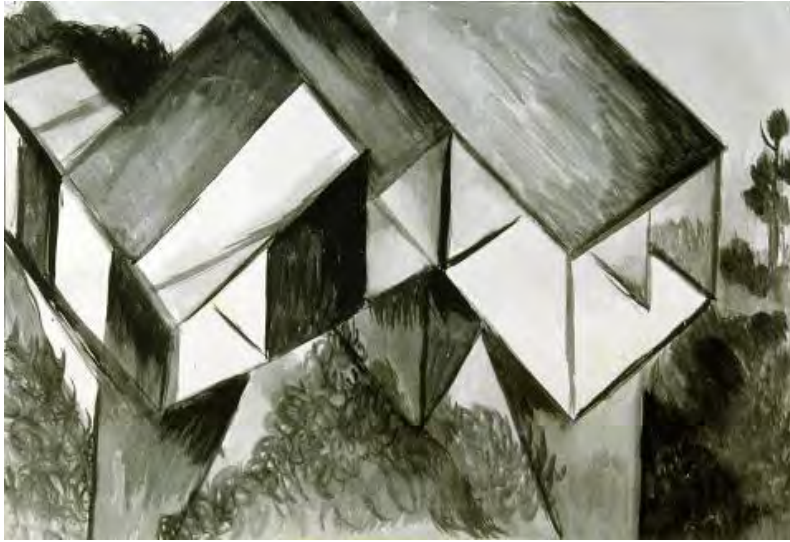


Figure 2 : Colin McCahon, *House for Titirangi*, 1955. Exhibited at the Group Show, Durham Street Gallery, Christchurch.

Initially a new bathroom was constructed in an area dug out beneath the lean-to area of the living room. The new room also doubled as a bunkroom for the children, with a simple trap door through the floor as internal access.²⁷ The toilet remained outside in a primitive enclosure. According to Victoria McCahon the toilet had no door only a metal swing arm from a truck with the word STOP on it to give privacy. The basement area was later expanded to form the two sleeping bays for the children. The roof of this area is the deck, the focus of social activity at the house. The sleeping bays were open sided "rooms", each with two wire-wove bunk beds and simple board shelves. The inspiration for this style of addition may have been the sleeping porches popular in Australia. McCahon had visited Sydney and Melbourne in 1951 where the suburban craze for sleeping in such unprivate conditions had elicited accusations of moral degeneration.²⁸

²⁵Draft catalogue, Folder 1, McCahon artists file, E.H. McCormick Research Library, Auckland City Art Gallery, p.8.

²⁶*New Zealand Herald*, 26 May 1990, Sec. 2, p.3.

²⁷ Personal communication with William McCahon 1 July 2003

²⁸Graeme Butler, *The Californian Bungalow in Australia*, Melbourne, 1995, pp.18-19 and Anne Fenwick, 'Remembering McCahon', *Listener*, 26 November 1988, p.27.



View from the girls' bunk room, open to the bush, 1950s photo Gerhard Rosenberg

The children all recalled the experience of sleeping in this unusual arrangement fondly. The area below had been cleared of bush down to the boundary and the open side of the “room” was a wall of mahoe and fuchsia. They woke with birdsong and would run in and out of this place as they wished. In the sloping yard were fruit trees, apple, peach and fig, and beside the house was a grapevine. The fig survives and a rather miserable grape. On the flat area beyond the bathroom were the vegetable garden, the chook house and the washing line.²⁹

McCahon also made informal pathways and retaining walls on the property. The paths were hand mixed using beach sand with cement. McCahon then raked this crude mortar out in the rain to form the various pathways on the property. The banks and steps were retained with ponga logs cut from the bush.³⁰

²⁹ Personal communication with William McCahon 1 July 2003, Victoria & Catherine McCahon 2 Oct. 2003

³⁰ Personal communication with William McCahon 1 July 2003



William's hut in the garden 1950's

photo Gerhardt Rosenberg

Anne evidently found the isolation of Titirangi difficult. She was far from her friends and family and the McCahons found themselves largely ostracised by the small Titirangi community.³¹

The family did take advantage of the quality of life in the area. One summer the family spent their time sailing all around the Manukau Harbour and enjoying the beaches and bush of the area.³² They entertained; the family were frequently visited by Colin's friends, colleagues and students, the poet John Caselberg, and artist Lois McIvor among others. There were long evenings spent dancing and talking on the deck.³³



*On the deck, left to right, Diana millar, Colin McCahon, Anne McCahon, Peter Tennant, Pat Hanly, Connie Larsen
Photo Barry Millar Oct. 1957*

Julian Rosenberg, a childhood friend of William, remembers the house as an inspirational place, with a tremendous sense of “home”. It was vital, full of conversation, music and the

³¹ Agnes Wood, *Colin McCahon: The Man and the Teacher*, Auckland, 1997, pp.55 and 56.

³² Draft catalogue, Folder 1, McCahon artists file, E.H. McCormick Research Library, Auckland City Art Gallery, p.9.

³³ Wood, pp.53-54.

smells of studio and domestic life. The McCahon family were involved in the place. Colin and Anne were great gardeners.³⁴

Pat Hanly visited the McCahons in 1957 with Barry and Dianne Millar, on his brief trip through Auckland before catching his ship to London. He was amazed by the tropical North and by the extraordinarily “modern” style of the McCahons’ house. He attributed this quality to McCahon’s association with Molly McAllistair and her husband George Hadyn, mentor of the then emerging Group Architects. To him the place was refreshing, an antidote to the prevailing Edwardian stuffiness of most New Zealand homes of that time, and a revelation after Christchurch of the 1950’s.³⁵



Colin McCahon in the Living Room Photo Barry Millar Oct. 1957



Colin & Anne in the Living Room Photo Barry Millar Oct. 1957 Painting Kauri 1957

The burden of raising children and keeping house and home together was left almost entirely to Anne. William McCahon recalled that despite Colin’s rising income “he never gave our mother enough housekeeping. She was expected to get by on the absolute minimum and it

³⁴ Personal communication with Julian Rosenberg 17 December 2003

³⁵ Personal communication Pat Hanly 8 Oct 2003

was static . . . She got £5 a week. Everything had to come out of that”.³⁶ For Colin, painting came first, family came second.³⁷

In 1956 McCahon was appointed keeper and deputy director of the Auckland City Art Gallery, having worked for some time as a gallery attendant. The following year he began teaching art classes on Thursday evenings at the gallery.³⁸ By 1958 Colin was beginning to be recognised as one of the leading painters of his generation. He was awarded a Carnegie travel



Colin McCahon, section of *Northland Panels*, 1958.

grant which enabled him to spend three months in America with Anne. Their return to the Tititangi landscape was difficult. McCahon wrote:

‘We sent home to the bush of Titirangi. It was cold and dripping and shut in - - and I had seen deserts and tumbleweed in fences and Salt Lake Flats, and the Faulkner country and magnolias in bloom, lit by candles in shining reflectors. My lovely kauris became too much for me.’³⁹

McCahon’s work turned away from west Auckland subjects. He wrote:

‘I fled north in memory and painted the *Northland Panels*’ . . . These were painted on the sun deck at Titirangi all in one Sunday afternoon and corrected for weeks afterwards’.⁴⁰

In 1958 McCahon carried out more building work on the property:

‘I built an extra bedroom under the quite extraordinary garage we had on top of our domestic cliff - the boys were moved into that. It had bunks and a clay floor and lovely sliding windows, sliding on coloured glass marbles.’⁴¹

³⁶Quoted in *Sunday Star Times*, 24 September 1995, D2.

³⁷*New Zealand Herald*, 26 May 1990, Sec.2, p.3.

³⁸Biography from ‘Colin McCahon: Gates and Journeys’, exhibition catalogue, ACAG, 1998, Folder 2, McCahon artists file, E.H. McCormick Research Library, Auckland City Art Gallery, p.71.

³⁹Draft catalogue, Folder 1, McCahon artists file, E.H. McCormick Research Library, Auckland City Art Gallery, p.5.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, p.5.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, p.5B.

The clay floor was in fact in the area furthest under the garage and was used as a bike shed.⁴²

It was in the garage above that McCahon did most of his painting. He recalled painting *'Tomorrow will be the same but not as this is'*, in 1958:

‘it wouldn’t go right and I got madder and madder . . . I hurled a whole lovely quart tin of black Dulux at the board and constructed the painting out of the mess.’⁴³



*Looking up at garage and sleep out. McCahon Family Archive
Hocken library*

This may have been partly as a result of his habit of painting with a flagon of wine at his side.⁴⁴

The year 1959 was a prolific year for McCahon. He painted the *'Elias Series'* of around 100 paintings.⁴⁵ In 1960 McCahon sold the Titirangi property and moved to Grey Lynn. In the

⁴² Personal communication with William McCahon 1 July 2003

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p.6.

⁴⁴ *New Zealand Herald*, 26 May 1990, Sec.2, p.3.

⁴⁵ Draft catalogue, Folder 1, McCahon artists file, E.H. McCormick Research Library, Auckland City Art Gallery, p.7.

house in Otitori Bay Road, McCahon left a mural on the wall of the dining area and a painted sliding kitchen cupboard.⁴⁶

At the time of his death in 1987 at the age of 67, he was considered to be Australasia's greatest painter. Anne died six years later.⁴⁷

⁴⁶Personal communication with Jacqueline Amoamo, 7 June 2002.

⁴⁷Wood, p.147.

1.3 AFTER McCAHON

In 1960 the McCahons sold the Titirangi property to friends Jacqueline and Tairongo Amoamo.⁴⁸ From 1960 until 1999 the property was largely kept as it had been left by the McCahons. Jacqueline and Tairongo made minor alterations to the property over the years. A flush toilet was installed during the mid-1980s. A roof was erected over part of the deck to provide shelter and to protect the windows from the elements. Another deck was built behind the garage and this provided a pleasant space to sit on summer evenings. The concrete path down to the house was repaired by Tim Shadbolt who also surfaced the deck with concrete. The mural on the wall was removed as Jacqueline felt that it dominated the house. The kitchen cupboard doors painted by McCahon were also removed from the house.⁴⁹ In the early 1970s Tairongo and Jacqueline separated. Jacqueline remained living in the Titirangi house and became the sole owner in 1975.



Tairongo Amoamo on the deck 1960's



In the garden 1960's

Photographs courtesy of Jacqueline Amoamo

⁴⁸ Certificate of Title 723/55 Land Information New Zealand, Auckland

⁴⁹ Personal communication with Jacqueline Amoamo, 7 June 2002.



View down to the house 1960's
Photographs courtesy of Jacqueline Amoamo



Edge of deck 1960s

In 1999 the Waitakere City Council acquired the property. In 2003 the property was given to the McCahon French Bay House Restoration and Residency Project Trust.⁵⁰ The Trust intends to conserve the property and to return it, as closely as possible, to its known state of 1959.



Figure 4 : Jacqueline Amoamo in the south lean-to living area. 1960's
Photograph courtesy of Jacqueline Amoamo.

⁵⁰Certificate of Title NA723/55, Land Information New Zealand, Auckland.

1.4 CHRONOLOGY

Abbreviations

Amoamo	Personal communication with Jacqueline Amoamo, 7 June 2002.
LINZ	Land Information New Zealand, Auckland.
Catalogue	Draft Catalogue, Folder 1, McCahon artists file, E.H McCormick Research Library, Auckland City Art Gallery.

Date	Event	Source
1919	Part of the Atkinson Estate in Titirangi is subdivided into 70 one acre lots.	LINZ , DP13120.
1923	Thirteen of the one acre lots are further subdivided into 37 new lots on Otitori Bay Road and Valley Road.	LINZ , DP17297.
1939	Lot 11 on Otitori Bay Road is sold to Herbert Godfrey Harpour.	LINZ , CT 723/55.
c1939	A small bach is built on the Otitori Bay Road site.	
1950	Albert and Matilda Mason purchase the property.	LINZ , CT 723/55.
1953	Colin McCahon purchases the property. His wife Anne and their four children move into the house.	LINZ , CT 723/55.
1953-1960	McCahon paints a mural on the wall of the dining area and sliding cupboard doors in the kitchen are decorated by McCahon. A small room is added to the front of the house and a deck is added behind the kitchen dining area.	Amoamo .
c1954	A sleeping porch is constructed underneath the house.	Catalogue , p.8 and Amoamo .
1955	Building Consent application lodged.	Waitakere City Council records .
1958	McCahon builds a bedroom under the garage.	Catalogue , p.5B.
1960	McCahon sells the property to Jacqueline and Tairongo Amoamo.	LINZ , CT 723/55 and Amoamo .

1960-1999	The McCahon mural and decorated kitchen cupboard doors are removed. Deck is built behind the garage. Many general repairs are carried out by Jacqueline and Tairongo Amoamo. Rotted weatherboards at the front of the house are replaced with shiplap boards. The roof of the garage is replaced and a window at the rear of the garage is removed.	Amoamo.
mid 1960s	Otitori Bay Road is widened. The path to the house is altered and Tim Shadbolt forms a new concrete path near the street frontage.	Amoamo.
1975	Jacqueline Amoamo becomes the sole owner of the property.	LINZ, CT 723/55.
mid 1980s	A flush toilet is installed to replace the bucket which had previously fulfilled this purpose.	Amoamo.
1999	Waitakere City Council purchase the building.	LINZ, CT 723/55.
2003	Waitakere City Council gift the property to the McCahon House Trust	LINZ, CT NA723/55.

1.5 DESCRIPTION OF THE HOUSE AT 67 OTITORI BAY ROAD

1.5 (i) Introduction

The property is located on the Southern side of Otitori Bay Road almost at the bottom of the road (which finishes as an esplanade along French Bay). The section falls away from the street down into a bush filled valley. There is a single garage on the street at the top end of the property which is cantilevered out over the bank. A crude sleep-out has been built below this cantilever and out from it. The house is sited on a bench made in the slope about six metres below the road and thirteen and a half metres in from the street boundary. The house is level with the cut ground on its northern side. A half-basement has been formed beneath the house on its lower side, facing south. The entire section is bush covered.



*Looking down on Colin's House from the road
1950's Photo Gerhardt Rosenberg*



*House from the pathway down
December 2003 Photo Graeme Burgess*



The path to Colin's house, 1950's
Photo Gerhardt Rosenberg



The path outside the garage, Dec. 2003
photo Graeme Burgess

1.5 (ii) Description

1.5 (ii) a. Entering the Property

A winding pathway leads back from the lower street boundary, along a falling contour, to a sleep out and deck, which have been built under the garage. The path then runs back between kauri trees and turns down to the house. The path is now very rough and broken. The original path was beach sand and shell concrete hand raked in place by McCahon.⁵¹ Along the first section of the pathway from the street are the remnants of a white painted handrail, 760mm high. This is constructed of arissed 75x 50 posts, set at uneven centres, with a horizontal 150x 10mm rail, set on edge, built by the Waitemata County Council when they widened the road.⁵² According to William McCahon, the original rail down the top section of the pathway was a plain water pipe rail. On the “cut” side of the path are the remains of vertical ponga logs, which appear to have been used as a primitive form of retaining. In some areas these have been replaced by 1/2 round tanalised posts, also set vertically. The banks around the house are similarly treated. The 1/2 round posts have not been set into the ground. There is a plain board letter box in an abstract style at the top of the path. This was built by the Amoamos to match the original McCahon letterbox.⁵³ According to William the letterbox was a plain American hoop letterbox. Another letterbox story, as yet unconfirmed, is that the artist Billy Apple now has the original letterbox.

⁵¹Personal communication with William McCahon 1 July 2003.

⁵²Personal communication with Jacqueline Amoamo 7 June 2002.

⁵³Personal communication with Jacqueline Amoamo 7 June 2002.



Figure 5 : Garage from the street. Burgess & Treep, Dec. 2003

1.5 (ii) b. Garage

The garage, used as a studio by McCahon, is a plain shed with a skillion roof across its width. It is built right up to the street. The entry is tar sealed. The entry doors are bi-folding vertical tongue & groove framed doors, installed by the Amoamos.⁵⁴ The roof is corrugated iron on timber sarking. Originally it was roofed in malthoid sheeting.⁵⁵ In the 1950's when the garage was level with the road, it dominated the corner.⁵⁶ The width of the garage is a bare 2.67m. It is 4.74m long on its right hand side (from the street) and 4.67m long on the left. The internal height is 1.9m on the left rising to 2.23m on the right. The rafters are braced down to the right hand studs with 25mm wide boards. The walls are weatherboard clad and unlined. The timber framing is minimal, both studs and rafters are 100x 50 framing at 700mm crs. At the end of the garage two timber braces, meeting at the sarking, have been fixed on the surface of the studs. There was a single window in this wall which was removed by Jacqueline Amoamo. There is a pair of casement windows set just back from the left rear corner of the garage, facing east. The floor is decked in butted timber boards.

⁵⁴Personal communication with Jacqueline Amoamo 7 June 2002.

⁵⁵Ibid & Personal communication William McCahon 1 July 2003

⁵⁶ Personal communication William McCahon 1 July 2003



Sleepout under the garage. Photo collage Graeme Burgess 2002

Below the end of the garage a room was built by McCahon for his sons as a bedroom.⁵⁷ This room is located partly under the garage and partly beyond it. The exterior of this room is finished in vertical wide rough sawn boards with 50 x 10mm battens. The door into the room, which directly faces the pathway, and the eastern base of the garage, is similarly finished.

⁵⁷Draft catalogue, Folder 1, McCahon artists file, E.H.McCormick Research library, Auckland City art Gallery,p5B

There is a tiki on the door which was fixed there by Jacqueline Amoamo.⁵⁸ The room is not lined. At the outside line of the garage above is a 150x50 post which supports the central bearer of the garage. The joists of the garage run across the room and are also exposed. The room is set back 1.5m under the garage, and 1.3m out beyond it. The projecting section has a lean-to roof framed of rough sawn 140x 50 pine. The floor is of wide timber boards. The clay floor mentioned by McCahon was the bike shed area back under the garage.⁵⁹ There are sections of wide board shelving within the room. In the end wall of the sleep out is an extraordinary glazing arrangement, formed of two demolition sourced double hung window sashes, one set vertically on the floor, the other on its side across it. These were set to run on coloured glass marbles.⁶⁰ The windows no longer function and have lost their marbles. Outside the end of the sleep-out is a deck which was constructed by Jacqueline Amoamo in an attempt to stabilise the garage. Before this was built there was only a narrow ledge/platform barely 300mm wide outside this room.⁶¹ The sub floor of the garage and sleep out, in contrast to the new timber piles of the deck, is redolent of an earlier time. Under the garage the sub floor structure is set on concrete piles. There is a brace between the second and third line of piles. Some of the concrete piles are no longer stable.



Sleepout windows interior, Graeme Burgess Dec 2003



Sleepout windows exterior, Graeme Burgess Dec 2003

⁵⁸Personal communication with Jacqueline Amoamo, 7 June 2002

⁵⁹Draft catalogue, Folder 1, McCahon artists file, E.H. McCormick Research Library, Auckland City Art Gallery, p.5B.

⁶⁰ Personal communication with Jacqueline Amoamo, 7 June 2002

⁶¹ Personal communication with Jacqueline Amoamo, 7 June 2002

1.5 (ii) d. House - General Description

The pathway from the street ends in a random tumble of a few steps which turn towards the house. The area around this side of the house into the entry porch and beyond is a concreted levelish cut. The concrete outside the entry is almost level with the floor of the house. The concrete is all very rough shell aggregate concrete with occasional decorative panels set into it formed with broken ceramics or shell. The paths and steps were begun by McCahon and carried on by the Amoamos.⁶² A concrete terrace extends out beyond the building to the west. On the bank above this another level platform has been formed. This is finished in the same random brick and concrete work and similar decorative tile work to that used elsewhere. According to William McCahon this area was formed after 1960.

The house itself is a very basic building. The core of the building is a simple gable running East/ West, (3.2m wide x 5m long), with a lean-to at the Western end. The entrance to the building is to the side of a lean-to on the northern side of the building. There is an enclosed “porch” at the eastern end and a roof, supported by a simple post, extends out to form the entry alcove. This feature was extended to its present form by the Amoamos.⁶³ There is a proprietary concrete chimney at the internal intersection of this alcove. A further lean-to “wing” has been added at the south-east corner of the building. A raised deck terrace (360mm above the floor) extends from outside the lean-to at the end of the main gable and out beyond the south east lean-to. The external access to the deck is a single step of 100x50s set on edge, built by McCahon in 1955.⁶⁴ The ground slopes down from the centre line of the main gable to the south on a gradient in excess of 30 degrees. Beneath this southern section of the building is a sequence of “open rooms”, which were the childrens’ bedrooms, and, at the eastern end, the laundry/ bathroom.

A set of ill-formed (and decorated) concrete steps leads past the western end of the deck down to the “open rooms” below the deck. According to Jacqueline Amoamo these were built by McCahon using ponga logs with gravel infill.⁶⁵ According to William McCahon the steps were formed of mudstone from French Bay.⁶⁶ Between the steps and the house is a retaining wall formed in a free curve of bricks, laid staggered apart, which was built by Jacqueline Amoamo.⁶⁷ This runs back behind the wall of the excavated basement, and is now filled with ferns.

In the garden at the lower side of the house is a large fig tree. This is the last remaining fruit tree. The McCahons planted a peach, grapes and cape gooseberries, acanthus, and small pink begonias. Victoria McCahon has cuttings from the begonia in her garden. The family encouraged some native shrubs, mahoe and fuchsia in particular, around the edges of the house. The bush was cleared down into the valley below the house. The rest of the bush around the house was thinned and the children could run freely through it.⁶⁸

⁶² Personal communication with Jacqueline Amoamo, 7 June 2002

⁶³ Personal communication with Jacqueline Amoamo, 7 June 2002

⁶⁴ Personal communication with William McCahon 2003 Personal communication William McCahon 1 July 2003

⁶⁵ Personal communication with Jacqueline Amoamo, 7 June 2002

⁶⁶ Personal communication with William McCahon 2003 Personal communication William McCahon 1 July 2003

⁶⁷ Personal communication with Jacqueline Amoamo, 7 June 2002

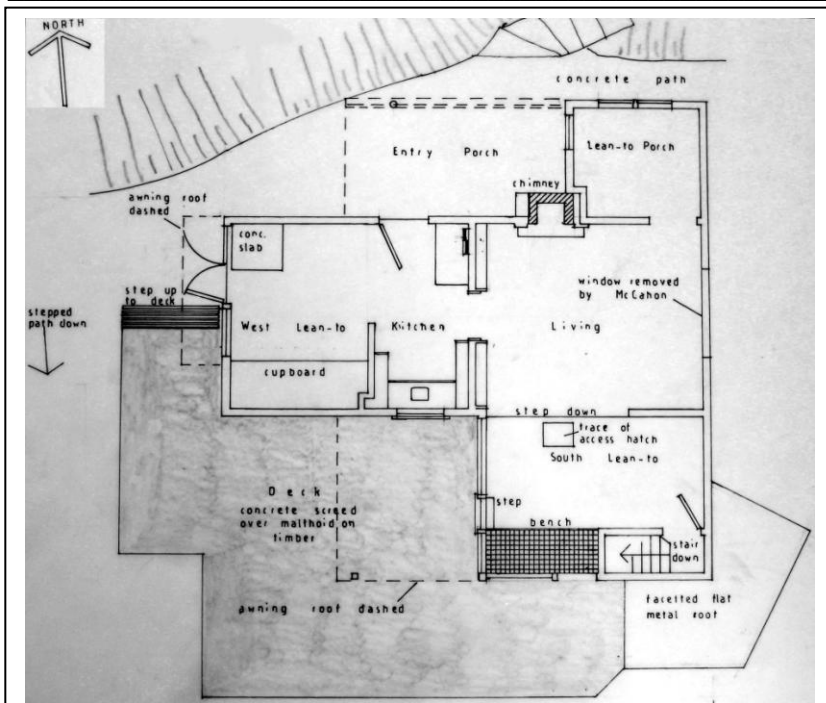
⁶⁸ Personal communication with William, Catherine & Victoria McCahon 2003



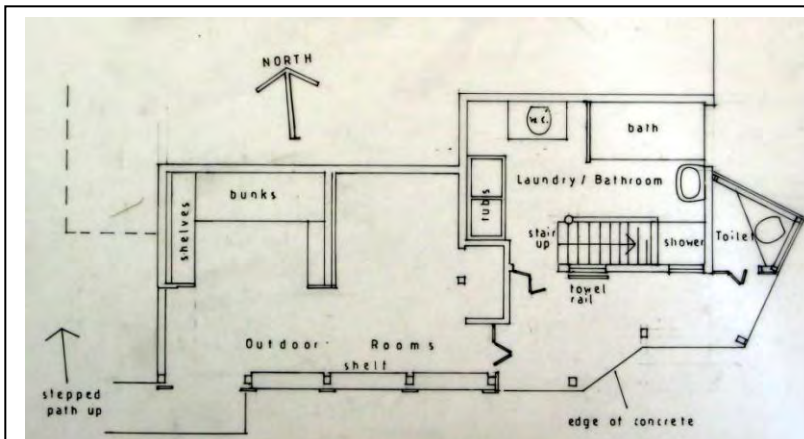
Looking through Colin's kitchen door 1950s
Photo Gerhardt Rosenberg



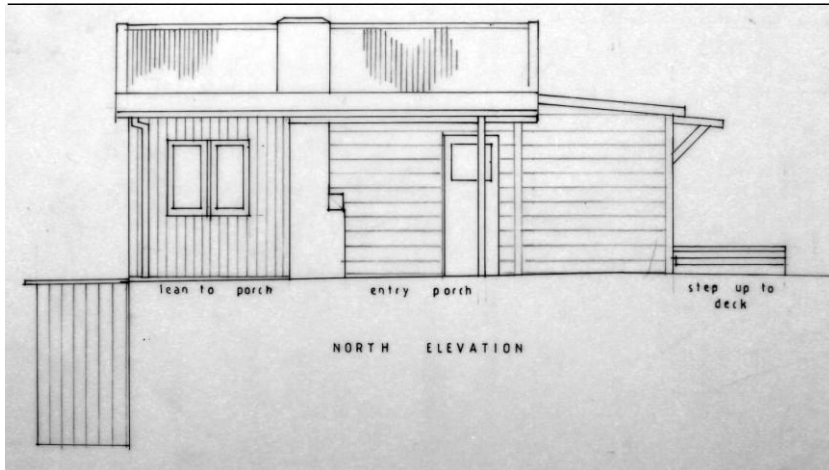
“ He is a good gardener, carpeting the bush with flowers”
Kauris on the site next to McCahons 1950s
Photo Gerhardt Rosenberg



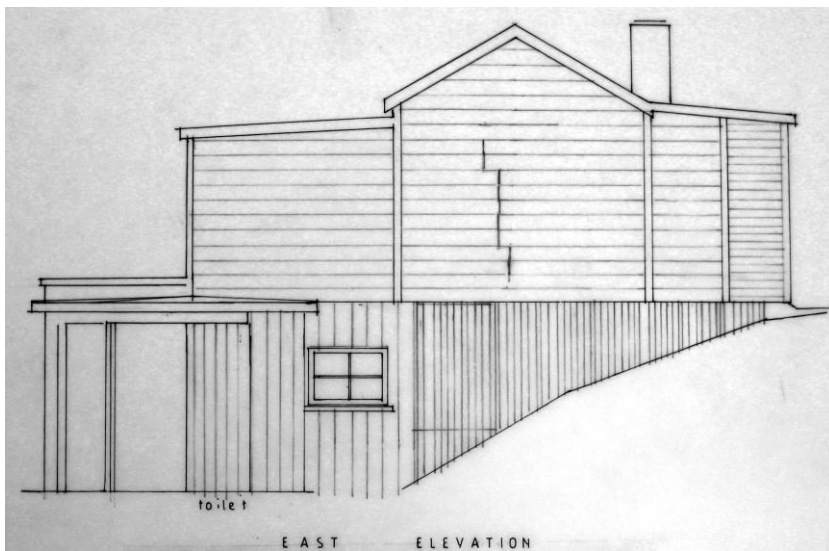
Main floor plan of house. Burgess & Treep Architects, 2002.



Lower floor plan of house. Burgess & Treep Architects, 2002.



North Elevation of house. Burgess & Treep Architects, 2002.



East Elevation of house. Burgess & Treep Architects, 2002.



*East Elevation, top outside laundry, centre general view, note washing line,
Bottom, north end*
Graeme Burgess Dec 2003



South Elevation of house. Burgess & Treep Architects, 2002.



West Elevation of house. Burgess & Treep Architects, 2002.



West Elevation Graeme Burgess Dec 2003

1.5 (ii) e. Exterior Finishes

a. Roof

The roof is corrugated iron with plain rolled barge flashings. The barges at the eastern end of the main gable are 200x 25 and the barge to the entry lean-to “porch” is 150x 25. The awning shelters at the western end of the building and above the deck are of clear corrugated material on unpainted pine framing. These were added by Jacqueline Amoamo.⁶⁹ Most of the spouting on the building is new p.v.c. There is a remnant section of 1/4 round galvanised spouting along the south eave of the main building. All the spouting discharges straight onto the ground. The chimney is a stacked prefabricated concrete chimney. The gable end soffits are plain boards which were replaced by Tairongo Amoamo to match the original.⁷⁰ The soffit at the entry is painted hardboard and batten. There are large gaps between the weatherboards and the soffits/ barges. According to William McCahon the roof was painted in K16 tar based aluminium paint.

b. Sub-floor

The subfloor of the building, excluding the “open room”, is all timber on concrete piles. Most of the sub-floor framing is borer ridden. There is no proper retaining beneath the house. Under the house was a tree stump known by the family as “Mr Mason’s stump”.⁷¹ The “open room” area is fully described later in this section.

c. Cladding

The cladding on the building varies. On the core gable the remaining cladding is 180mm cover weatherboards. This remains at the Eastern end of the building (where it is strangely butted, without soakers, part way across the wall) and on the internal wall of the entry alcove. The odd butted boards on the Eastern wall were explained by Victoria and William. To create a reasonable hanging surface Colin removed a large window from this wall.⁷² There are corner boxes and boxed vertical junctions on the Eastern wall. The base of this wall is finished in random width vertical whalings, mostly around 150mm but with some 75mm. The enclosed “porch” is clad in narrower, random cover weatherboards on the eastern side and by vertical shiplap boards on it’s other walls. The base of this wall has malthoid sheeting run under the concrete pathway and back up under the cladding. Vertical shiplap boards have also been used to clad the lean-to at the western end of the main gable. All the vertical shiplap boards were added by the Amoamos..⁷³

Around the deck area the cladding changes to creosoted wide board and batten. Below the deck and around the outside of the lower area the cladding is plain butted vertical rough sawn boards, all creosoted. The walls inside this area are a mixture of rough sawn vertical boards and battened fibrolite. There are no window facings, except on the kitchen window, and no soakers over butt joints in the weather boards. Malthoid has been used to weather the base of

⁶⁹ Personal communication with Jacqueline Amoamo, 7 June 2002

⁷⁰ Personal communication with Jacqueline Amoamo, 7 June 2002

⁷¹ Personal communication Victoria & Catherine McCahon 2003.

⁷² Personal communication William Catherine & Victoria McCahon 2003

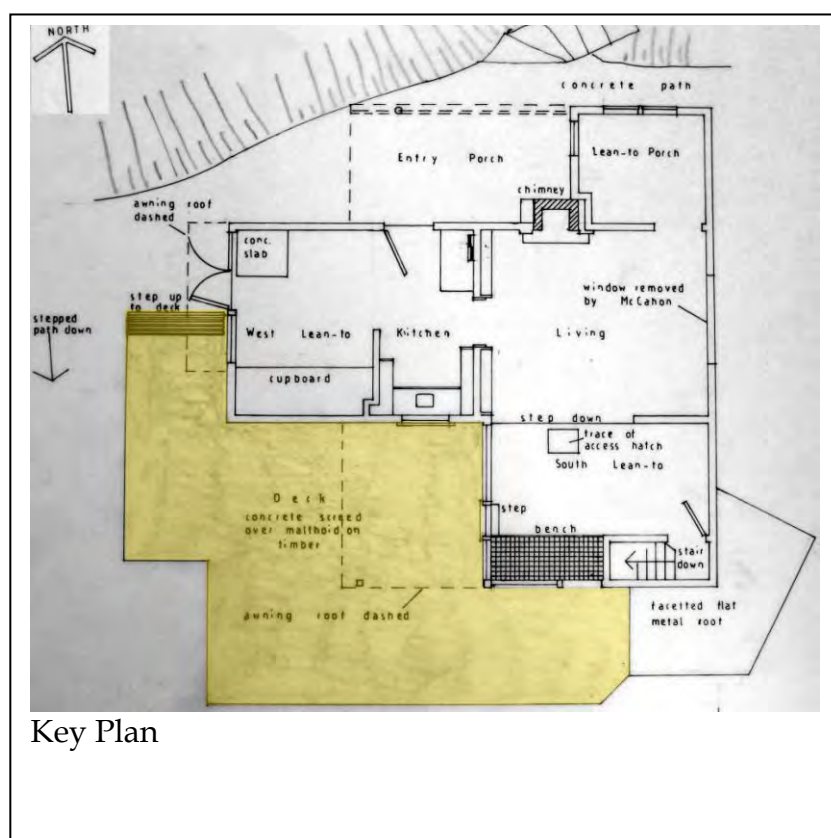
⁷³ Personal communication with Jacqueline Amoamo, 7 June 2002

the building where concrete has been poured against it. On the Northern side of the building the finished exterior ground level is very close to, and sometimes above, the level of the house. The exterior was painted in Ferric oxide and creosote.⁷⁴

d. Joinery

The joinery on the building is an odd mixture; some recycled, one casement and some purpose built “light walls” formed of glazed framing timbers. These last windows are sculptural, and were created by McCahon The Group architects used joinery to spectacular effect in their houses of this period. The gap between the window frames and cladding is filled with putty. The front door is a bungalow door with a high glazed top panel and three sunk lower panels. Jacqueline Amoamo fixed linoleum sheets into the panels to stop draughts.⁷⁵ This door was painted forest green.⁷⁶

e. Deck/Terrace



The deck, as previously described, is an open platform which has been built as the roof to the “outdoor room” below. It is 360mm above the internal floor of the building. The deck was originally of broad timber boards, covered with malthoid sheeting. This has been overlaid with concrete in a falling wedge. The concrete has been laid on a malthoid barrier and a tarry substance has been used to seal the new deck to the weatherboards. The deck is unrailed. There is a single step up to the deck, formed of 100x50s placed on edge across a pair of concrete

blocks. The only other access is through a window from the extended living room. Above this area of the terrace is a clear roofed lean-to, supported by a post seated directly on the deck. This lean-to is not original.

⁷⁴ Personal communication William McCahon 1 July 2003

⁷⁵ Personal communication with Jacqeline Amoamo 7 June 2002.

⁷⁶ Personal communication William McCahon 1 July 2003



Deck 1950's Courtesy of McCahon Family Archive

The deck is framed in 150x50 joists running across it. These are supported on 100x75 bearers which are supported 100mm back from the exterior line of the deck on 100x75 posts set on 10mm diam. bars on raised concrete plinths. There is a 100x 50 tie between each post at the outside line. The posts were faced with rough sawn 250x25mm boards. Most of these have now fallen away. The facing boards were also carried across the head between the posts to frame each opening. There are remnants of very plain rough sawn shelves which ran between the posts in the second, third, and fourth bays from the West end. The entire structure is fully exposed. The original wide board decking runs between the joists. The ends of the boards are affected by rot. The area below the deck is a sequence of “open rooms”.



Windows to the deck, above living room, right kitchen window



Graeme Burgess Dec 2003



South corner of living room

Graeme Burgess Dec 2003



Step up to deck

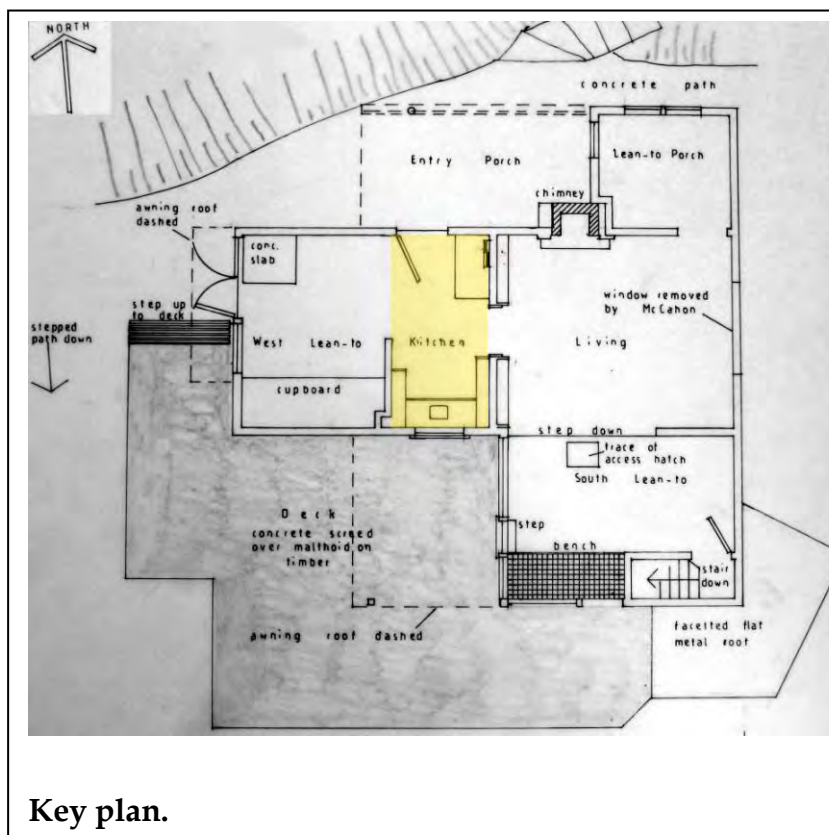
Graeme Burgess Dec 2003



View from entry porch up the pathway
Graeme Burgess Dec 2003

1.5 (ii) f. House Interior

a. Entry/ Kitchen



Key plan.

From the entry alcove the front door of the house opens into the kitchen area, which is in the original section of the building. The floors throughout the main level of the house are tongued and grooved timber flooring (rimu or matai). The floors were originally covered in brown linoleum.⁷⁷ The ceiling in this entry/kitchen area is stippled plaster with wide planted battens. The cornice is of plain boards, one horizontal, one on the vertical plane. All the electrical wiring in the house has been run exposed over the surfaces.

⁷⁷ Personal communication Victoria & Catherine McCahon 2 October 2003.



*Kitchen interior: left, bench, window & needle rack, right, door to living room, entry door
Photos Graeme Burgess Dec 2003*

According to William McCahon the wiring was all in black metal conduit run to round switches set on wooden blocks. The light fittings throughout the house were plain white porcelain Chinese hats.⁷⁸ To the left of the entry door is a panel of green mosaic tiles set at table height. The tile panel was built by Jacqueline Amoamo.⁷⁹ There is an exposed slate distribution board above the mosaic panel. The original wall colour remains behind this panel.⁸⁰ McCahon painted a cover for the distribution board, “a quick and dirty green plane.”⁸¹ To the right of this panel is an open doorway into the main living area of the house. The wall between the kitchen and the west lean-to is largely open. A beam runs from the kitchen side across to the entry wall, which runs flush through into the lean-to.

The kitchen is basic. There is a sink bench on the south wall, with a four light awning hung window above it. The bench is finished in yellow linoleum and trimmed with a painted timber moulding. The top edge of this moulding is bull nosed. There are sliding doors below the bench. The remaining cupboards and shelves are a random jumble. These have all been built in situ of solid timber, and are painted. When the McCahon family lived in the house the shelves were oiled.⁸² The most unusual remaining feature of the shelving is the plate rack, to the left of the kitchen bench, which has been created using steel knitting needles set into holes in the shelving. There was a pair of sliding cupboard doors which were decoratively painted by McCahon. These were mounted to slide on a metal rod system.⁸³

⁷⁸ Personal communication Victoria & Catherine McCahon 2 October 2003

⁷⁹ Personal communication with Jacqueline Amoamo, 7 June 2002

⁸⁰ Personal communication with Jacqueline Amoamo, 7 June 2002

⁸¹ Personal communication William McCahon 1 July 2003

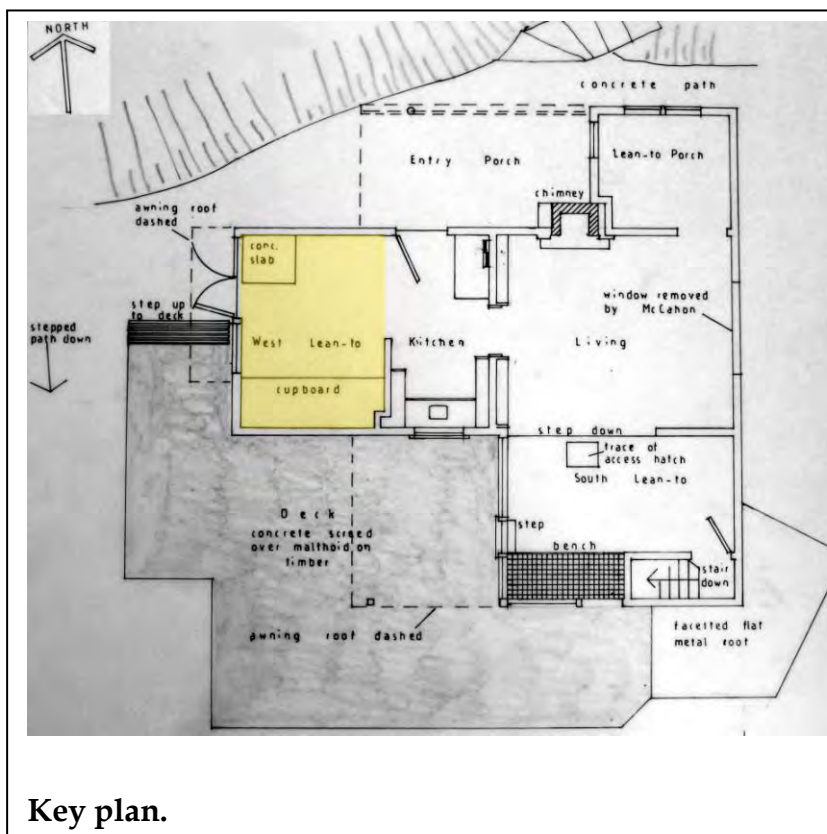
⁸² Personal communication William McCahon 1 July 2003

⁸³ Personal communication with Jacqueline Amoamo, 7 June 2002



Kitchen cupboard door painted by Colin McCahon exhibited at Moller Gallery in 1969.

b. West Lean-to, Dining Room



Key plan.

The lean-to to the West side of the kitchen (and open to it), has a tongued and grooved ceiling which follows the fall of the roof. The floor is also strip timber. There is a remnant plastered concrete hearth in the North West corner of the room. Above this, in the ceiling, is a metal cover plate where the flue has been removed. On the West wall is a pair of Victorian French doors which have been adapted to fit the wall. These are fitted direct to the framing with 1/4 round beads each side (both inside and out) of the doors for weathering.

The concrete terrace outside these doors is above the floor level of the house and the threshold of the doors has been plastered up to a lip to prevent water flowing into the room (a gap has opened between the hearth and the North wall and surface water does run under the building in this area). Beside the doors is a two light window which is directly glazed into the framing. On the north wall there was mural panel by McCahon which was removed in the 1960s.⁸⁴ The mural was formed to the shape of the wall. On the centre of the wall was a simple table made using a flush panel door set out from the wall on tree trunk legs. Colin McCahon's favourite place

⁸⁴ Personal communication with Jacqueline Amoamo, 7 June 2002

was sitting at this table looking out.⁸⁵ The cupboard opposite was the bath alcove, (housing the hot water cylinder) and then, when the bathroom below was built, it became a wardrobe with a simple curtain.⁸⁶ Victoria and Catherine McCahon recalled hardboard doors set using hook eyes on a metal rail, the system used by McCahon for the kitchen shelf door. Supplejack was used to fashion cupboard door handles.⁸⁷



Mural from the house painted by Colin McCahon



West lean-to interior: left, doors to garden, right, mural wall



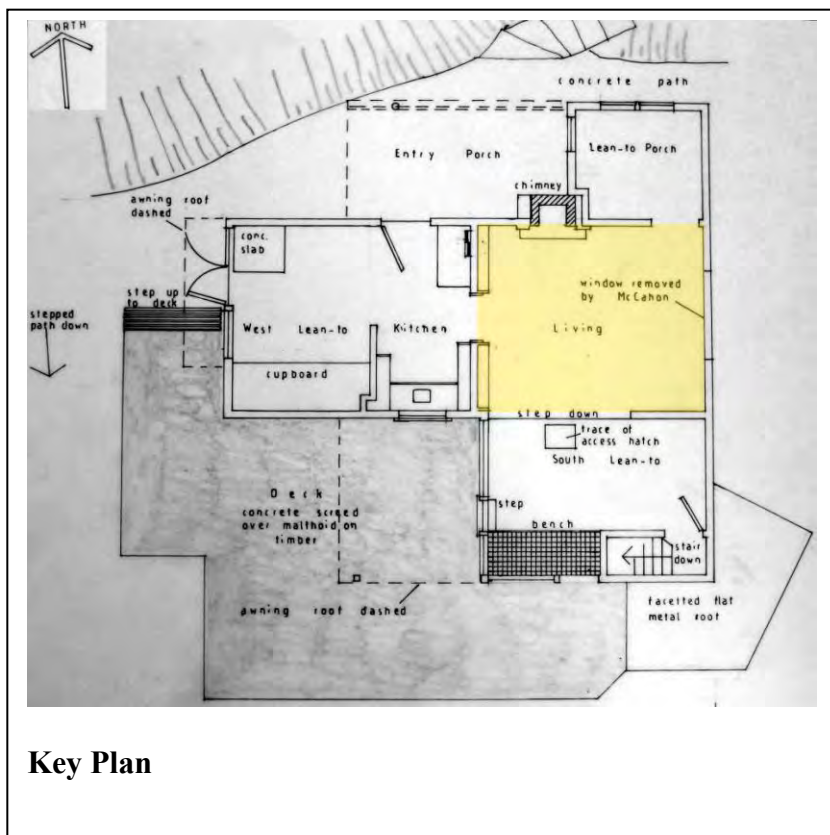
Graeme Burgess Dec 2003

⁸⁵ Personal communication William McCahon 1 July 2003

⁸⁶ Personal communication William McCahon 1 July 2003

⁸⁷ Personal communication Catherine & Victoria McCahon 2 October 2003

c. Living Room



On the east wall of the Entry lobby/kitchen a doorway (no door) opens into the living room. This opening has a very deep reveal made up of two 220x25 boards set against each other which frame the shelving which runs each way from the doorway against this wall. Some of the shelving was purpose built by McCahon for his gramophone records.⁸⁸ This room, with the entry lobby/ kitchen, is the original section of the building. The floor is of strip timber, the walls are now plastered gib board. The ceiling is a flat battened ceiling with plaster panels. There are three battens across the room and one along. The cornice is similar to the kitchen cornice but with a 1/4 round moulding to the intersection of the wall and ceiling. The plaster panels are a “pebble/ amoeba” pattern. On the northern wall is the fireplace. The plain board mantle of the fireplace runs right across from the entry wall. The fireplace surround is defined by a grid of 40x22 battens. These are finished to the wall by a 1/4 round moulding. The fireplace opening has been blocked by a board panel. Vertical on the centre of this panel is a batten painted by Tairongo with a Kowhaiwhai design. All the shelves in this area were also originally plain oiled timber. The shelves on the fireplace side were built to the depth of *Phaeton* books, the shelves on the lean-to side were shallower, the depth of *Penguin*

⁸⁸ Personal communication with Jacqueline Amoamo, 7 June 2002

paperbacks. The radio/record player sat in the *Phaedon* area. Anne habitually sat in a chair by the *Penguin* shelves.⁸⁹ The walls in this area were finished in plywood with a soft grey rubbed into the surface.⁹⁰



*View across living room to fire, door to bedroom on the right
Bookshelves on the left*
Graeme Burgess Dec 2003



View through kitchen & deck, note: bookshelves
Graeme Burgess Dec 2003

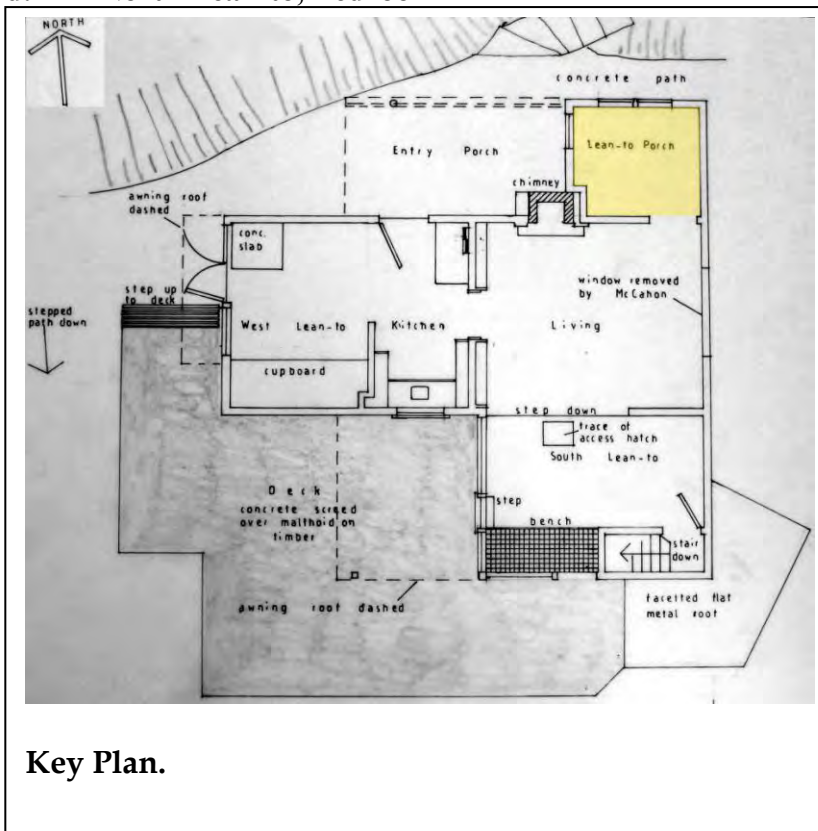
⁸⁹Personal communication William, Catherine & Victoria McCahon 1July & 2 Oct. 2003

⁹⁰ Personal communication Victoria McCahon 2 October 2003



View across living room to corner window Graeme Burgess Dec 2003

d. North Lean-to, Bedroom



Key Plan.

To the right of the fireplace is the doorway (no door) into the diminutive lean-to room at the north-east corner of the building. This room is similarly finished. The ceiling follows the fall of the roof. At the internal corner the wall is stepped to accommodate the chimney. Centred on the north wall is a double casement window. There is a matching single casement on the west wall. This room was Colin and Anne's bedroom.⁹¹

⁹¹ Personal communication Catherine McCahon 2 October 2003



Shelves to chimney corner *Graeme Burgess Dec 2003*



Windows in bedroom

Graeme Burgess Dec 2003



Corner windows to deck,

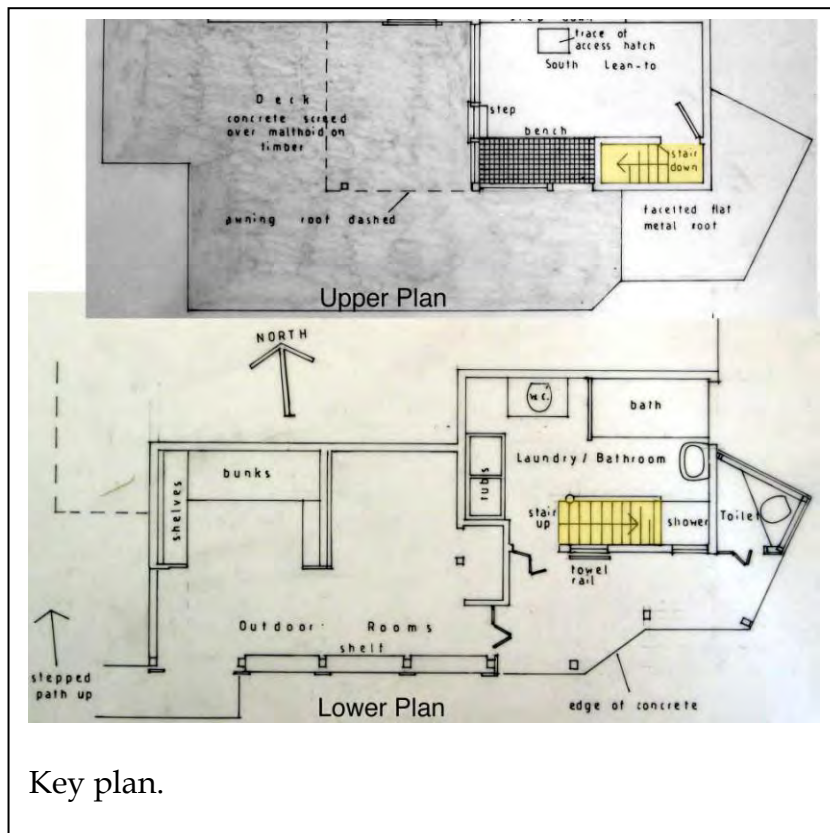
Graeme Burgess Dec 2003



Corner windows

Graeme Burgess Dec 2003

f. Ladder / Stair

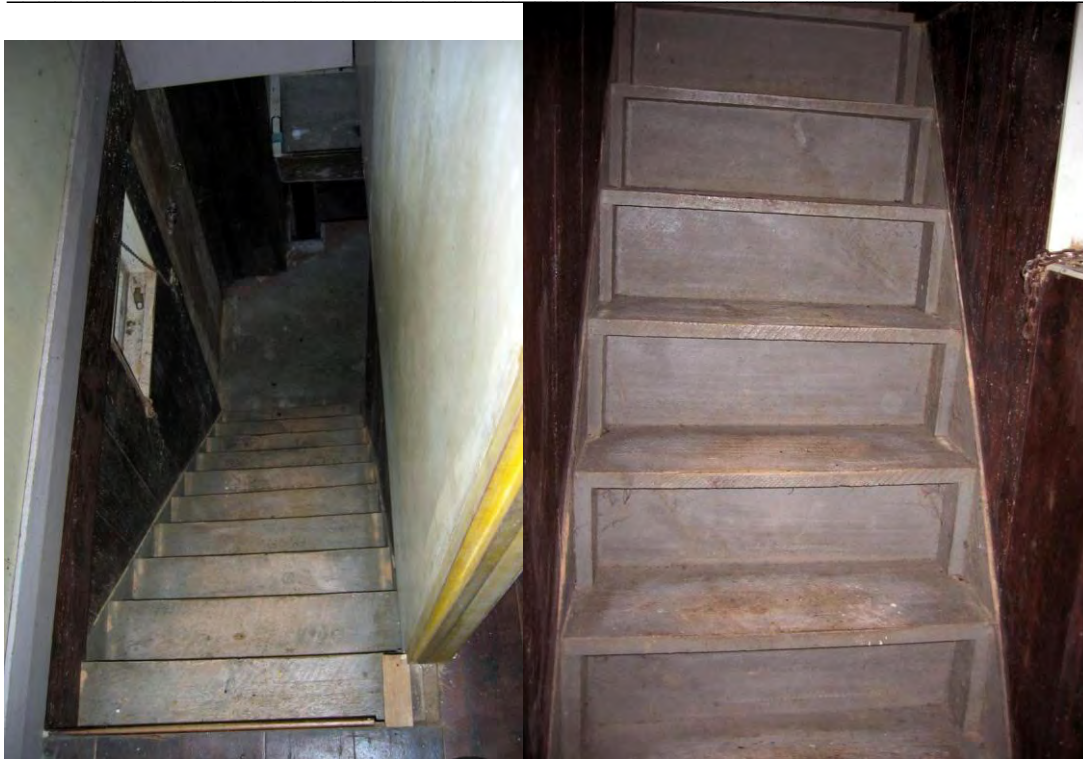


Key plan.

This stair, built by McCahon, runs down the exterior wall landing in the Laundry area of the Bathroom/ Laundry room below. At the bottom of the stair the inside wall finishes in a natural post stripped of its bark. The stair is most unconventional. The treads, of rough sawn timber, are turned down at each side to the tread below and have a very deep toe space. The stringers are finished in line with the linings. The stair is more a ladder or ship's stair than a domestic stair, a consequence of the very tight use of space. The unusual construction gives the stair a sculptural composition, which is let

down by the quality of construction. The first riser is only half the height of the remaining risers, an ergonomic disaster. McCahon finished the panelling of the stair using a blowtorch and linseed oil.⁹⁶

⁹⁶ Personal communication Victoria McCahon 2 October 2003



Stair, left view down, right view up

Graeme Burgess Oct. 2003



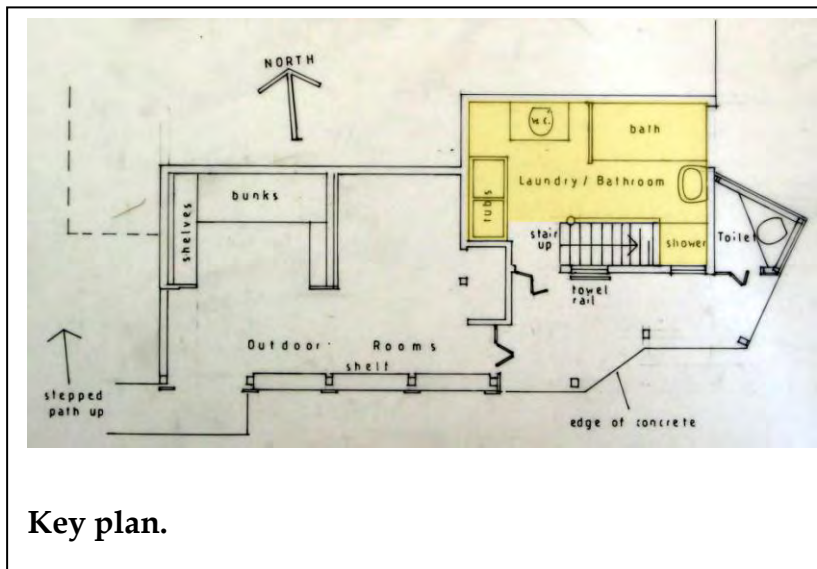
Stair from laundry

Graeme Burgess Oct. 2003



Bathroom interior, Graeme Burgess Oct 2003

g. Bathroom/ Laundry



The Bathroom/ Laundry opens to the “walkway” of the “open rooms”. This entire area was constructed by McCahon.⁹⁷ It is an enclosed room, internally connected to the main floor of the house by the Ladder/ stair. It is lined in white painted oil-tempered hardboard which is finished with a variety of battens; some ‘D’ mould, some 1/4 round, some rectangular flat.

According to William

McCahon the panels in this area were painted in geometric patterns by his father.⁹⁸ The floor throughout is concrete, which is continuous with the concrete of the “walkway”. The concrete has remnants of red paint. The ceiling is also lined in painted hardboard. According to Jacqueline Amoamo there was also some yellow used in this room.⁹⁹ The bearers are exposed. The floor to bearer height is 1900mm. Opposite the bottom of the stair, on the

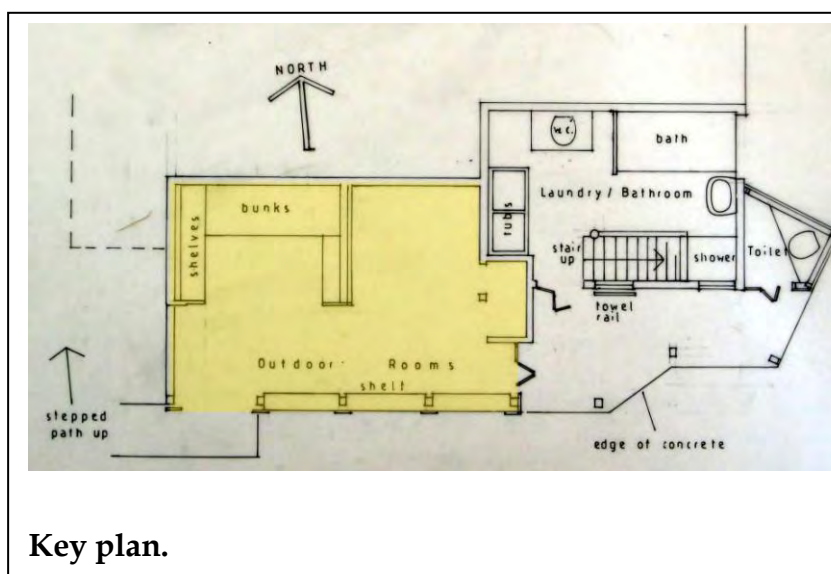
⁹⁷ Personal communication with Jacqueline Amoamo, 7 June 2002

⁹⁸ Personal communication William McCahon 1 July 2003

⁹⁹ Personal communication with Jacqueline Amoamo, 7 June 2002

western wall, is a pair of concrete laundry tubs on a creosoted timber plinth. On the north wall at this end of the room is a makeshift toilet platform constructed when the sewerage was connected in the mid-1980s.¹⁰⁰ There is a hardboard clad board partition at the end of the bath which is set against the northern wall through to the eastern end of the room. On the wall above the bath beside the partition is a planted board shelf. The bottom section of this has evenly set out, 5mm diameter, dowel pegs along it. One of these has broken. Above the bath on the east wall is a top hung awning window, divided into four lights. The cill and jambs of this window are in very poor condition. Beside the window on the eastern wall is a new pedestal basin. Within the return beneath the stair landing above is a very small shower cubicle, also finished in painted hardboard, and concrete floored. There is a window in this space in line with the stair window. The shower drains straight out via a terracotta pipe into a drainage channel within the outdoor toilet.

h. “Open Rooms”



In the area below the house to the south, “alcove/rooms” have been formed between each of the bearer lines. The end wall (west), the back wall, and return walls of this area are seated on a raised concrete plinth. There is a “walkway” along the outside, with a folding gate constructed of three rough sawn boards to separate the “ablutions” area. The western end wall finishes in a glazed

stud wall. This end “room”, the girls’ bedroom, has two bunk beds against the back wall and an arrangement of boxed shelves made of the same rough sawn wide boards across the western wall. Catherine slept on top and Victoria below.¹⁰¹ The shelf runs across the top of the window and down the internal side to form a broad reveal. The interior walls have been finished in fibrolite sheet with 50x10mm battens. On the back wall these are fixed around the sheet edges and across the horizontal centre line. There are also vertical battens to the lower sheet on the western wall. The internal return wall is finished in rough sawn shelving.

¹⁰⁰ Personal communication with Jacqueline Amoamo, 7 June 2002

¹⁰¹ Personal communication Victoria & Catherine McCahon 2 October 2003



Corner of "open rooms"

Graeme Burgess Dec 2003



William McCahon in the boy's bunkroom

Graeme Burgess July 2003



*Victoria & Catherine McCahon with Tania Mace
Outside the girls bunkroom*

Graeme Burgess Oct 2003



View from the girls' bunk room, open to the bush, 1950s photo Gerhard Rosenberg



Sleepout windows interior, Graeme Burgess Dec 2003



*"Open Rooms" girls bunkroom
Photos Graeme Burgess Dec 2003*



"Open Rooms" boys bunkroom

The second "room", the boys' room, is similarly finished.¹⁰² There is a "wardrobe" recess in the eastern return wall. At the end of this wall the line of the building steps back out. At the corner is a rough sawn three-leaf board "gate" hung from the house and hinged to fold back on itself and onto the wall. The leaves have been roughly painted in the three colours universally used in this area of the building; earth red (Resene Indian Red), a cream/white, and creosote black. The side facing west is red/red/black. The east side is black/white/white. The paint has been applied in a very casual manner with colour splashes each way. This painting is the original paintwork done by McCahon.¹⁰³ These colours are a signature in this area. The rear wall of the first alcove is cream/white. The west wall and "ceiling" structure are earth red. The red has been smeared down the dividing wall of the first alcove to just below the joists. The exterior and posts have been creosoted. The shelves between the posts (refer to the description of the "open rooms" in the previous section) appear to be part of the original composition. The McCahon children remember this side of the "rooms" being open, enclosed only by bushes and open beyond down into the valley.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² Personal communication Victoria & Catherine McCahon 2 October 2003

¹⁰³ Personal communication William McCahon 1 July 2003

¹⁰⁴ Personal communication William Catherine & Victoria McCahon 1 July & 2 October 2003



Walkway outside bathroom Graeme Burgess Dec 2003



Outside the toilet

Graeme Burgess 2002

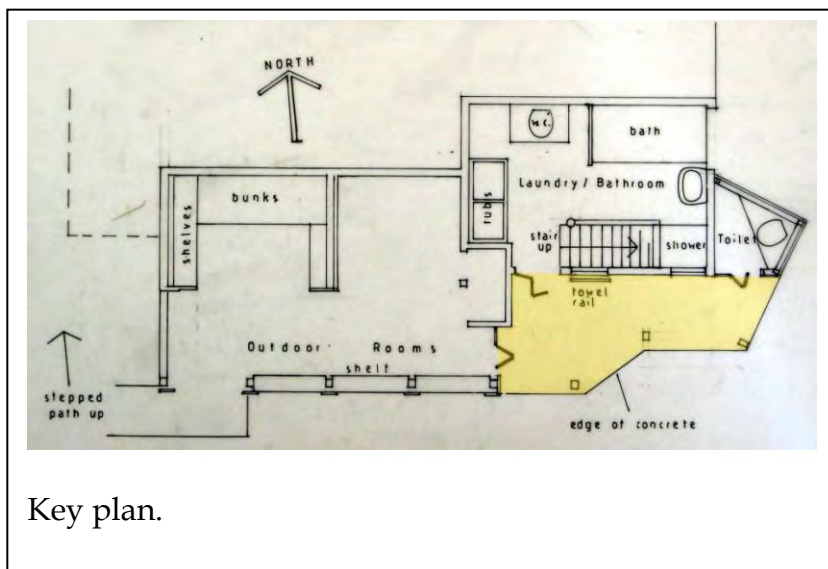


Walkway outside laundry, door to toilet on the right.....Graeme Burgess 2002

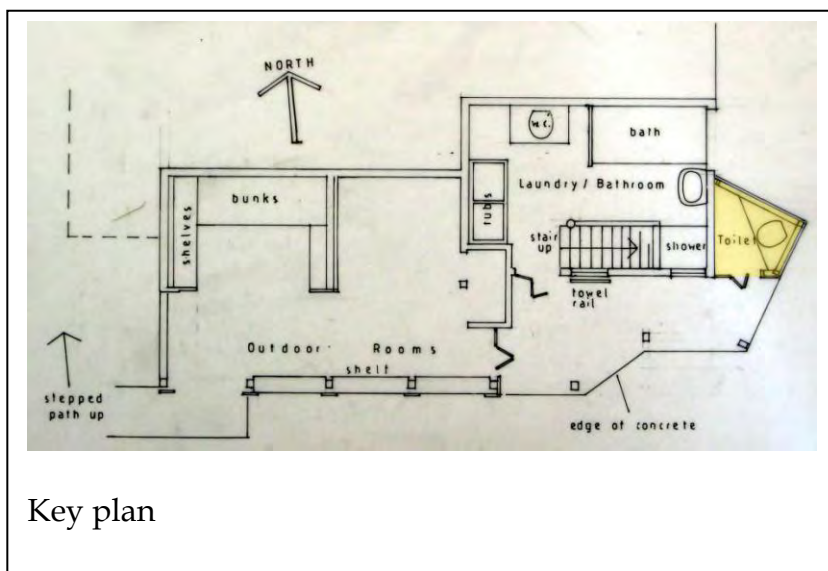


Looking up at the walkway area

Graeme Burgess Dec 2003



running along at the top of this wall. A three section rough sawn board door (as per the “gate” and the toilet door) opens into the laundry and bathroom. The concrete floor runs level into this space. To the immediate right of the door, inside, is the ladder/ stair up to the main floor of the house. There are two small windows in the outside wall, one to light the stair, the other for the shower recess. Both are painted red. Beneath the stair window is a horizontal towel rail on wire cup hooks.



At the end of the “walkway” is an oddly shaped semi-open toilet. The concrete floor in this area has been dished across the edge of the building as a drainage channel. The shower recess inside the building drains into this channel. The room is framed in rough sawn 100x50s and clad in vertical butted rough sawn boards. The interior is painted red, the exterior is creosoted. The door is a half-height door constructed of three vertical rough sawn boards designed to fold back against themselves. The exterior of the door is white, the interior is unpainted. The wooden toilet seat is set in a plain fibrolite plinth. The plinth has been left unfinished. The roof of this free form addition to the building is faceted galvanised iron sheet set on rough sawn sarking. An area of this has been repaired without matching the original detail. According to William there was no cover outside the toilet. The toilet was a “*Casko*” can set beneath the wooden seat. This was only for the use of Anne and the girls.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁵ Personal communication William McCahon 1 July 2003

Catherine and Victoria recalled using a signal arm taken from a truck to indicate that the toilet was in use.



Looking up at the toilet from the garden

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1.6 ASSESSMENT OF HERITAGE VALUE

1.6 (i) Explanation

The building as it stands is evidence of events and activities associated with Colin McCahon and his family. It is the place where he lived with his family from 1953-1960, a period of extraordinary development in his painting style. He carried out many changes to the building which remain relatively intact. This is the essence of the significance of the place. It is also evidence of the social history and development of Titirangi. This has been considered of secondary significance in this document.

In assessing the significance of the fabric of the building, the Heritage Values given are highest for components of the building which existed or have been confirmed as being built during the time that the McCahon family lived at the property. Recent changes have been considered of little or no significance.

The following tables are based on the description of the property (**Section 1.5**). On the right hand side a heritage value is given. These values are intended to guide any processes undertaken on the buildings, as defined in the section “Conservation Processes” in the ICOMOS (NZ) Charter (Appendix One) ;

Heritage Value 3 - *Of great significance* Work on spaces or elements of great significance is limited to non-intervention, maintenance, stabilisation, repair.

Heritage Value 2 - *Significant* These items should be preserved and protected where this does not conflict with the conservation of items of higher significance. Building fabric and spaces with a Heritage Value of 2 may be adapted to new uses, otherwise work must be limited to maintenance, stabilisation, restoration, reconstruction and reinstatement.

Heritage Value 1 - *Of little Significance* It is preferable to retain these items. Removal may be justified where this facilitates the recovery of overall significance. Any modifications must not conflict with items of a higher Heritage Value.

Neg. - *Of no Significance* These items may be retained for practical or functional reasons as long as they do not obscure components or sections of the building with Heritage Values of 2 or 3. If possible parts of the building's fabric rated Neg. should be removed.

Int.-Intrusive- *detracts from the heritage significance of the place* These items should be removed or concealed.

1.6 (ii) Tabulation of Heritage Values

PATHWAY

Layout of pathways		H.V.3
Surface of pathways	conc. by McCahon	H.V. 2
	conc. by Shadbolt	neg
	Other surfaces	neg.
Ponga log walls		H.V.3
Tanalised post walls	int.	
Letter box		neg
Path rail (at top)		neg

GARAGE

Timber structure		H.V.3
Roof	sarking	H.V.3
	c.g.i. Roofing	neg.
Cladding	main weatherboards	H.V.2
	broad butted base boards	H.V. 3
Timber floor		H.V.3
Windows		H.V.2
Door to the street	(confirmation req.)	neg.

SLEEP OUT

Exterior	broad butted boards	H.V.3
	matching door	H.V.3
	windows	H.V.3
	original subfloor	H.V.3
	new deck	int.
Interior	exposed framing	H.V.3
	shelves within framing	H.V.3
	timber floor	H.V.3

HOUSE EXTERIOR

Landscape around the House

Concrete pathways	H.V.1
Open terraces	H.V.2
Ponga log walls	H.V.2
Steps down to “Open Rooms”	neg.
Brick retaining	neg.
Fig tree below the house	H.V.3
Remnant plantings from 1950s	H.V.3

Roof

C.g.i. roofing	H.V. 3
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	Timber barge flashings	H.V. 3
	Spouting	neg.
	Chimney	H.V.3
	Entry Porch Roof	int.
	Awning Roofs	int.
	Original roof form	H.V.3
Walls		
	bevel back weather boards	H.V.2
	timber soffits & facings	H.V.2
	vertical shiplap	int.
	broad butted boards	H.V.3
	board & batten	H.V.2
Joinery		
	front door	H.V.2
	French doors	H.V.2
	3 board doors	H.V.3
	Casement windows	H.V.2
	Glazed frames	H.V.3
	Casement to deck	H.V.3
	Louvres	H.V.1
Deck		
	Concrete screed	int.
	Deck structure	H.V.3
	Facings to “Open Rooms”	H.V.3
	Deck form	H.V.3
	Step (ex. 4x2’s on edge)	H.V.3
HOUSE INTERIOR		
General		
	Timber floors	H.V.2
	Gib.bd. linings	H.V.1
	Exposed electrical wiring	
	in metal conduit	H.V.2
	Exposed wiring	neg.
Entry/Kitchen		
	Ceiling (battened plaster)	H.V.2
	Cornice	H.V.2
	Mosaic tile wall panel	int.
	Electrical distrib. bd.	Int.
	Openings to adjoining rooms	H.V.3
	Kitchen bench	H.V.3
	Kitchen shelving	H.V.3
	Plate rack	H.V.3
	Remnants of cpd door slide	H.V.3
West Lean to		
	Ceiling (tongued & grooved)	H.V.2

Living Room	Metal flue plate on ceiling	H.V.1
	Joinery	refer above
	Hearth slab	neg.
	Mural wall	H.V.3
Lean-to porch	Ceiling (battened plaster)	H.V.2
	Shelving	H.V.3
	Fireplace surround	H.V.2
	Kowhaiwhai batten	neg.
	Floor, with access trace	H.V.3
Living Room lean-to	Ceiling	H.V.2
	Other finishes	refer above
Ladder/Stair	Ceiling battened soft board	H.V.2
	Partition to stair	int.
	Step to casement window	H.V.3
	Joinery	refer above
	Bench over stair	H.V. 3
	Checker-board finish on bench	int.
Bathroom/Laundry	Stair framing	H.V.3
	Stair linings	H.V.3
	Post at base of stair	H.V.3
Outdoor rooms	Linings battened hardboard	H.V.3
	Laundry tubs and stand	H.V.3
	Bath screen	H.V.3
	New toilet	int.
	Bath	H.V.2
	Hand basin	neg.
	Shower	H.V.3
	Floor	H.V.3
	Original colours	to be determined
Outside toilet	Structure	H.V.3
	Cladding	H.V.3
	Linings/framing	H.V.3
	Bunk beds and shelving	H.V.3
	Original colours	H.V.3
	Towel rail	H.V.3
	3 board gates	H.V.3
Roof	Original hardware	H.V.3
	Framing and cladding	H.V.3
Outside toilet	Seat framing	H.V.3

Concrete floor	H.V.3
Original colours	H.V.3
3 board gate	H.V.3

1.7 STATEMENT OF CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

- * The property was the home of Colin McCahon and his family from 1953-1960**
- * The buildings (cottage & garage) were altered in a basic and eccentric manner by McCahon and these alterations remain largely intact.**
- * The property is evidence of how the McCahon family lived at that time**
- * The property is evidence of the early phase of the development of Titirangi as a “weekend bush retreat”. Very few of these original weekend properties remain.**
- * The McCahon house contributes to the understanding of Titirangi during its earliest years as a bush suburb.**

2.0 CONSERVATION POLICY

2.1 METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this document is to provide a tool which can be used to guide the future care and use of 67 Otitori Bay Road and to ensure that all factors affecting the building are considered. The document is intended to enhance the meaning of the building to the community by encouraging the understanding of its history and an appreciation of its qualities. It is hoped that the story told in this document will encourage further research of the history of the McCahon family in Titirangi and the role that this place has played in that history.

In order to determine appropriate conservation policies for the building, the building has been inspected and described and the existing archival records of the development of the building have been researched. From this information an assessment has been made of the Heritage Value of the building and its component parts (refer to Part One : Cultural Significance 1.5 Assessment of Heritage Value). The Heritage Values are intended to clearly guide which conservation processes (as defined in the ICOMOS (NZ) Charter) are appropriate for each part of the building, to ensure that any changes, including maintenance and repair, will not destroy the cultural heritage significance of the place.

Outside organisations have an interest in the building. The building is registered by the New Zealand Historic Places Trust. The draft of this report was funded by the Waitakere City Council, and the future of the building will depend on further funding from outside sources. If any work is to be carried out on the building it will be necessary to apply to the Waitakere City Council for Building Consent and Resource Consent. An application would be assessed against the requirements of relevant Statutory Codes, the Building Act (1991) in particular. It is essential that these organisations are supportive in the process, and have a clear understanding of the conservation issues involved. The responsibilities of these external authorities, and how their requirements may influence processes of change, has been considered in formulating the conservation policies.

The requirements of the property owners, the intended use of the building and its intimate relationship with the community, are fundamental to the success of the conservation of the building.

Consideration has also been given to the existing condition of the building. This will have considerable impact as the building has construction problems and is in a poor state of repair.

The Guiding Conservation Principles which follow are the essential principles which should be applied, by all involved, to protect the building as a place of cultural heritage value and to ensure that the future development of the building is appropriately managed.

2.2 GUIDING CONSERVATION PRINCIPLES

The ICOMOS NZ Aotearoa Charter (Appendix 1) sets out the definitions and guiding principles of building conservation. These methods and principles are intended to give clear guidelines as to how change can be managed, especially appropriate methods for carrying out building work. The intention of these principles is to ensure that the fabric of the building of significant heritage value is retained and appropriately treated.

Policy 1 - The fabric of the building which has been assessed as significantly contributing to the understanding of the building as a place of cultural heritage value (as set out in the Statement of Cultural Significance) must be protected.

Policy 2 - The principles and guidelines of the ICMOS NZ Aotearoa Charter are to be applied in determining the appropriate methods and /or treatment of the building and its parts to ensure the preservation and care of it's significance

Policy 3 - A formal process should be established to ensure that the recommendations of this document are supported by the external authorities which may be involved in decisions regarding it's future.

Policy 4 - The NZHPT must be informed of any processes which may affect the form/fabric of the building.

Policy 5 - In considering changes to be made to the building, whether for Building or Resource Consent, the Territorial Authority must give full consideration to the cultural significance of the building, and it's parts (as set out in the tabulations of Heritage Values)

Policy 6 - Where possible, without compromising the heritage value of the building, new work is to comply with the requirements of the Building Act.

Policy 7 - All work on the building should be carried out by experienced trades people who are aware of (and sympathetic to) conservation requirements and are familiar with the conservation processes and methodologies set out in the ICOMOS NZ Aotearoa Charter .

2.3 IMPLEMENTATION OF CONSERVATION POLICY

2.3 (i) Explanation

The conservation and maintenance of 67 Otitori Bay Road will be influenced by the requirements of a number of outside authorities or organisations which may have a role determining the future of the building. These organisations need to be made aware of why the building is significant and how they can assist in its preservation/conservation. **(refer to Conservation Policies 3 - 7)**

2.3 (ii) New Zealand Historic Places Trust

67 Otitori Bay Road is protected under the provisions of the Historic Places Act 1993. The building has a Category C registration. This category is defined (section 22(3)(a)(i) of the Historic places Act 1993 as: “ Places of special or outstanding historical or cultural heritage significance or value.”

The New Zealand Historic Places Trust is defined as a “heritage protection authority” under the provisions of section 187 of the Resource Management Act 1991. Section 94(2)(b) of the act requires the local authority to notify the N.Z.H.P.T. of any proposed changes to any registered building. **(refer to Conservation Policies 3 & 4)**

2.3 (iii) LOCAL AUTHORITY - WAITAKERE CITY COUNCIL

The Waitakere City Council is the local territorial authority responsible for administering the provisions of the Resource Management Act (1991). The site and buildings are subject to all the ordinary provisions of the Waitakere City Council District Plan, as they apply to this property.

The building has been registered by the Waitakere City Council. Any proposed change which involves the removal of original building fabric or which will obscure parts of the building will require a Resource Consent (proposal to be assessed against the recommendations and policies of this conservation plan) and may require a Building Consent. The provisions and requirements of the Building Act are considered by the Territorial Authority when processing Building Consent applications. A Building Consent is required for any changes to the building which involve changes to the structure of the building , or changes to the building services. The Building Act covers all services (plumbing, drainage, electrical) and sets out all the provisions which apply to them. The Building Act (1991) also addresses the fire safety, disabled access requirements and structural integrity.

Where possible, when new work is undertaken, it should be carried out in accordance with the requirements of the Building Act, “as nearly as is reasonably practicable”. In considering and applying these provisions the Territorial Authority is required to take into account the special historical and cultural value of the place to ensure that these qualities are not compromised. **(refer to Conservation Policies 3 - 6).**

2.3 (iv) OWNER'S REQUIREMENTS AND USES

The building is owned by the McCahon House Trust. The Trust intends to develop the property as a place to further the understanding of the contribution of Colin McCahon in the development of New Zealand art since 1950, and as a place to better understand the daily life of the McCahon family at that time.

All work, from basic maintenance through to the introduction of new facilities, has an effect on the fabric of the building and may affect the heritage value of the building. This document is intended to guide these decisions to ensure that

'any change . . . should be the minimum necessary and should not detract from the cultural heritage value of the place. Any additions and alterations should be compatible with the original fabric but should be sufficiently distinct that they can be read as new work.'
(I.C.O.M.O.S. Charter, 20. Adaptation)

The existing condition of the building, which is considered later in this document, will affect how the building can be used.

Policy 8 - The proposed uses of the building should respect and if possible reinforce the cultural heritage value of the place.

Policy 9 - Parts of the building which have been assessed as being of significant heritage value can only be used in their original form.

Policy 10 - The McCahon House Trust should establish an archive of material relating to McCahon's time in Titirangi. This will reinforce the value of the buildings to the community and help to further the understanding of this place.

2.3 (v) INTERPRETATION

The property is evidence of how the McCahon family lived during their time in Titirangi. Most of the fabric of the buildings have not been substantially changed and are a record of that period. The place can become a lodestone for gathering further evidence of that period from those who lived or frequently visited during the 1950's. This will reinforce the meaning of the place and help to further explain what the remaining physical evidence in the house, garage and garden represents.

Establishing an archive as discussed in 2.3 (iv) "Owners Requirements and Uses", will greatly encourage an understanding of Colin McCahon's life with his family during the 1950s. To reinforce this the building should be repaired and restored as closely as practicable to its condition during the McCahon years.

Policy 11 - On the basis of the assessment of the evidence made in this report and any verifiable evidence that may be forthcoming as a result, the building and site should be restored to its form, fabric, and colours, as closely as possible, as it was at the end of the 1950's (refer also to policies 8, 9 and 10 above).

2.3 (vi) EXISTING CONDITION OF THE BUILDING

The building is in poor condition. The exterior of the building is deteriorating. The roof is rusted and damaged in many places.

All the building services, electrical, plumbing, storm water and foul water need to be checked for safety and condition. The electrical services have been run on the surface of the linings. At the time the McCahons lived in the house all wiring was run in metal conduit and switches and power points were round fittings on wooden blocks.

Work to stabilise the building is urgently needed. It is in very bad condition and requires a substantial amount of work. The full extent of the work required will not be obvious until work commences. The costs to stabilise the building will be substantial and are likely to exceed estimates as unforeseen work is certain to be needed.

Graeme Purdie, Building Surveyor, carried out a survey of the condition of the building in August 2001 (Appendix 6 of this document). His survey and recommendations, are thorough and sound, which the buildings are not. There are further considerations required to ensure that work undertaken to stabilise or otherwise change the buildings and property will not obscure or destroy the fabric of the place which has been assessed as having high Heritage Value.

Policy 12 - Identify areas of remedial work/ stabilisation which would require changes to fabric of high Heritage Value. Establish methods and processes to carry out this work which will have as little effect on these areas as possible. Checking all services, (electrical, plumbing, storm water and sewerage) based on Graeme Purdie's Report with full account given to the Heritage Assessment & other Conservation Policies in this report.

Once the building has been stabilised and restored a programme of regular cyclical maintenance needs to be established by the owners. The objective of “preventative” maintenance is to do the right thing at the right time, to do what is necessary and to have a checking and approval process for the work. This involves cleaning and repair and the checking of services and building fabric for use and wear. General cleaning needs to be carried out depending on frequency of use. Allowance needs to be made for larger refurbishment such as painting and re-roofing, which should be scheduled on a period determined by the expected life of those materials from new.

Policy 13 - Establish the full extent of repair and reconstruction work required to stabilise the building (i.e. to make the building watertight and to prevent further decay, including checking all services) and get costs for carrying this work out. based on the Guiding Conservation policies set out in Policies 1 & 2.

Policy 14 - Establish a programme to carry out the work giving priority to work which is essential to stabilise the building,

Policy 15 - Carry out this work as soon as possible, if necessary in stages

Policy 16 - Full consideration must be given to the manner in which services are run within the building to ensure that wherever possible all services are hidden, or authentic to the 1950s period. Service connections should be run into the building under the floor.

Policy 17 - Limit access to the building until stabilisation work has been carried out.

Policy 18 - A regular maintenance programme must be established for the building which takes full account of the heritage value of the building fabric.

2.3 (vii) FIRE SAFETY AND SECURITY

Fire is the greatest single threat to the building. The best protection against fire is prevention. Some of the issues discussed elsewhere have a bearing on fire safety, in particular the condition of the electrical services and the provisions of the Building Act regarding fire safety and egress.

To the greatest extent possible fire protection systems such as heat and smoke detectors with alarms connected to the local brigade should be installed in the building. Management policies should also be established to ensure that electrical services are regularly checked and that accelerants are not kept on the property. There should be no smoking in or around the building as a further control to protect against the possibility of fire. The vegetation around the building should be controlled to keep flammable material away from the exterior of the building.

During any building process there is also a greater chance of fire damage than during normal use. Proper care and attention is required to ensure that problems do not occur which may result in a fire.

Policy 19 - The best possible fire protection systems, heat & smoke detectors, and a sprinkler system connected to an alarm should be installed. There should be rules for use (e.g. no smoking, building to be secured out of hours of use).

The McCahon house presents a security problem. If the decision is made to restore it to the condition and facilities it had in 1959, it will not meet modern health and safety requirements. It would be a museum, not a house. Unfortunately, the best security for the property would be for it to be occupied. The house is not visible from the street and could easily be broken into or otherwise damaged. This problem is not easily resolved.

Policy 20 - Building Security: A full, monitored alarm system, including cameras, should be installed. There should be some provision for general lighting.

Policy 21 - Any re-planning of the building must take into account fire egress requirements. This will depend on the proposed use of the building.

2.3 (viii) FACILITIES FOR THE DISABLED

When planning changes to the building, provision should be made to ensure that the requirements of the disabled are taken into account. This applies particularly to access.

Policy 22 - Provision of facilities for the disabled should be made as discretely as possible with respect to Heritage Values as set out in Cultural Significance section of this document.

2.4 SUMMARY OF CONSERVATION POLICIES

Policy 11 - On the basis of the assessment of the evidence made in this report and any verifiable evidence that may be forthcoming as a result, the building and site should be restored to its form, fabric, and colours, as closely as possible, as it was at the end of the 1950's (refer also to policies 8, 9 and 10 above).

Policy 1 - The fabric of the buildings which has been assessed as significantly contributing to the understanding of 67 Otitori Bay Road as a place of cultural heritage value (as set out in the Statement of Cultural Significance) must be protected.

Policy 2 - The principles and guidelines of the ICOMOS NZ Aotearoa Charter are to be applied in determining the appropriate methods and /or treatment of the building and its parts to ensure the preservation and care of its significance

Policy 3 - A formal process should be established to ensure that the recommendations of this document are supported by the external authorities which may be involved in decisions regarding its future.

Policy 7 - All work on the building should be carried out by experienced trades people who are aware of (and sympathetic to) conservation requirements, and are familiar with the conservation processes and methodologies set out in the ICOMOS NZ Aotearoa Charter.