

Negotiating a place for Agricultural and Pastoral Shows in Canterbury, New Zealand

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Abstract

Agricultural and Pastoral (A&P) shows bring together farming and non-farming communities across the urban-rural continuum. Prior research demonstrates that visitors experience a range of activities that promote a sense of trust in agriculture, which suggests they are important places for negotiating a social licence to farm. Based on our analysis of five A&P showgrounds in the Canterbury region, our research indicates that the places where A&P Shows are held are also subject to negotiation. This is evident in changes in their location over time, different ownership structures and relationships with local councils, and infrastructure to enable multiple uses by the local community.

Keywords: Agricultural shows, farming, social licence to operate, urban-rural divide

1. Introduction

Agricultural and Pastoral (A&P) Shows have a long history in New Zealand, with the first shows held in the 1840s (Phillips, 2008). They are public events organised by local A&P Associations that are often held in towns and cities, as well as more rural locations. Show programmes traditionally encompass a diverse range of activities and competitions, showcasing animals, food, equipment, skills, and recreation associated with agricultural activities, and providing sideshow entertainment and family fun. Research demonstrates that A&P Shows foster connections between rural and urban communities (Scott & Laurie, 2010) and play an important role in “re-imagining” agriculture in the face of public pressures (Holloway, 2004), thereby promoting a “sense of trust in agriculture” (Larsen, 2017, p. 679). As such, they can be interpreted as places where an understanding – and endorsement – of agricultural activities is negotiated with non-farming publics.

This interpretation of A&P Shows as places where farmers and non-farmers can meet, interact and build trust resonates with the concept of social licence. Although there are numerous definitions of social licence, it is often used to refer to public acceptance of a company, commercial activity, industry or sector (Boutilier & Thomson, 2011; Edwards & Trafford, 2016; Sinner et al., 2020). Social licence does not replace a legal permit, but it may be needed in addition to one, particularly in contexts where “negative public perceptions” can lead to problems for an industry or company (Sinner et al., 2020, p. 1). Consequently, research suggests that building trust-based relationships with community members based on meaningful two-way dialogue is a key component of social licence (Edwards & Trafford, 2016; Moffat & Zhang, 2014).

The importance of building trust-based relationships in social licence negotiations has been explored in relation to a range of industries, including mining (Boutilier & Thomson, 2011; Moffat & Zhang, 2014) and aquaculture (Sinner et al., 2020). So far there has been limited application to agricultural activities (Williams & Martin, 2011); nevertheless, there are clear connections between themes in the social licence literature as detailed above and agricultural activities in New Zealand, which have faced mounting public pressure in recent years in relation to (for example) environmental impacts and animal welfare concerns. These connections have been recognised, and there is an emerging body of research that explores social licence to farm in New Zealand (Beban et al., 2023; Booth et al., 2024; Castka et al., 2023; Vallance & Edwards, 2023). Furthermore, recent research highlights that A&P Shows are important places where a social licence to farm is negotiated between farming and non-farming publics (Edwards et al., 2024; Beban et al., 2023; Vallance & Edwards, 2023).

This paper contributes to the nascent literature on A&P Shows and social licence to farm by providing a deeper understanding of the places where A&P Shows are held. We examine ongoing changes to the showgrounds of five A&P Shows across the Canterbury region and argue that A&P Shows must themselves negotiate a “place” in New Zealand society. After detailing our study methods, we situate Canterbury A&P Shows in a broader context by providing a historical overview of their national and international institutional structure, and also detail the charitable objectives of the A&P Associations that organise the five A&P Shows included in this study. We then provide geographical and historical details of the showgrounds and public domains that have been used to host these A&P Shows. Drawing on these details, we then discuss ongoing changes to the places where A&P Shows are held, and various factors that have influenced these changes, including the role of local authorities.

2. Methods

Our research focuses on five A&P Shows across the Canterbury region: Amberley, Little River, Ashburton, Southern Canterbury, and Canterbury (now known as the New Zealand Agricultural Show). These shows were selected because, as will be explained in the sections below, they range in sizes and are located across the Canterbury region in urban and more rural settings. Taking a qualitative case study approach (Mabry, 2008), we used document analysis and observational methods to examine the showgrounds used for each of these A&P Shows, with the aim of understanding the current location and features of these showgrounds, and how they have changed over time. Our document analysis on a range of publicly available sources including A&P Association websites; the Charities register; local government websites; historical satellite imagery; and local news media. Each show was also visited in person by one of the research team (Donna Patterson) for at least one full day^[1] during the 2022-23 summer period, thus enabling direct observation of the position and physical

[1] Visit dates were as follows: Amberley Show, Sunday 29th Oct 2022; Little River Show, Saturday 21st Jan 2023; Ashburton Show, Saturday 28th Oct 2022; Southern Canterbury Show, Saturday 5th Nov 2022; New Zealand Agricultural Show, Wednesday 9th and Friday 11th Nov 2022.

features of each showground. Show activities were observed during these visits, with detailed notes and photographs taken (for further details see Edwards et al., 2024). Follow-up interviews with two A&P Association Committee members were also conducted to clarify details relating to the history, ownership and use of the showgrounds. Ethical approval for this research was provided through Manaaki Whenua-Landcare Research’s internal social ethics process (approval number 2223/07).

3. Canterbury A&P Associations: Institutional structure and objectives

Societies for the improvement of agriculture were part of the greater exhibition and societies movement that originated in Britain (Treadwell, 2006; Wild, 1951). The Highland Agricultural Society of Edinburgh was formed in 1784 to “promote the regeneration of rural Scotland”, hosting its first show in 1822 (RHASS, n.d.; Phillips, 2008). Other regions followed, and the Royal Agricultural Society of England (RASE) was formed in 1838 (RASE, n.d.) with the motto “Practice with Science” (Wild, 1951, p.5). The society was granted a Royal Charter by Queen Victoria in 1840, and held shows to foster the use of science in farming to increase productivity and optimise food resources for England’s rapidly growing population (RASE, n.d.).

Similar agricultural and pastoral societies were formed in settler-colonial societies across the world including Australia, Canada, and the United States (Wild, 1951). In New Zealand, the first agricultural show was held in the Bay of Islands in 1842, followed by the first formally organised Agricultural and Horticultural Society of Auckland in 1843 (Stringleman & Hunt, 2010). As Europeans and their farming activities spread through New Zealand, A&P Associations and Shows also formed throughout the country. Early regional and local shows featured combinations of agricultural, horticultural, botanical and pastoral societies. Typically, one or two decades after a new farming settlement or town was established, an agricultural society would be formed and annual shows organised (Carter et al., 2008).

New Zealand’s Royal Agricultural Society (RAS) was established in 1924 as an umbrella organisation for the country’s by then numerous A&P Associations (Wild, 1951; RAS, 2023a). This national organisational structure persists today, although a handful of smaller rural A&P Associations are not members of the RAS. The RAS is divided into six districts; the RAS Central District includes all Canterbury A&P Associations, as shown in Table 1, as well as associations in Westland, Nelson and Marlborough (RAS, 2023b). Internationally, the colonial roots of A&P Associations and Shows in New Zealand are maintained through links between the RAS and the Royal Agricultural Society of the Commonwealth (RAS, 2023a). Furthermore, links to the Crown are reinforced through patronage and show activities. An annual A&P Show may be designated as a “Royal Show”, which is seen as a method of maintaining show standards, promoting the prestige of the show, hosting royal dignitaries and increasing attendance numbers (Shiels, 2012). The Canterbury A&P Association has held several Royal Shows, including its 150th anniversary show in 2012, many of which have been attended by members of the Royal family. The New Zealand Governor General has been the continuing patron of the RAS, and attends Royal Show openings throughout the country (Treadwell, 2006).

New Zealand’s nearly 100 contemporary A&P Associations are incorporated societies under the Agricultural and Pastoral Societies Act 1908, and are also registered charities under the Charities Act 2005. The registered charitable purpose of each of the Canterbury A&P Associations included in this study reveals a common focus on the promotion of agriculture in a general sense, whilst also allowing each association to meet the needs and interests of their specific communities (see Table 2). These associations provide the institutional structure for promoting a variety of agricultural and pastoral activities, including, but not limited to, the running of an annual A&P Show. Furthermore, an A&P Show may have a different name to the association that runs it, as is the case for the Little River Show and New Zealand Agricultural Show. Importantly, the charitable purpose for three of

these associations specifically mention holding a “show”, “exhibition” or “fair”, thus highlighting the central role of annual shows in A&P Association activities. Furthermore, four A&P Associations are tasked with reaching out to the “community”, “other groups”, and to “[bring] together town and country”, indicating their role in building connections across societal groups, which in turn links to social licence negotiations. Only the Canterbury A&P Association does not refer to community links, which is interesting given that its annual show is the most visited in the region, and its recent rebranding as the New Zealand Agricultural Show positions it as an important meeting point for urban/rural and farming/non-farming communities across the country.

To explore these five Canterbury A&P Shows in more detail, we will now turn to the places where they are held. As we will explain, these places may be association-owned showgrounds, publicly owned domains, or a hybrid of the two. Local councils play different roles in enabling show activities which is at least partly related to the model of land ownership and use that applies in each case. We will discuss these roles following a brief description of each A&P showground. We begin with the most northern of the shows, Amberley, and work our way south to the Southern Canterbury Show, ending with the New Zealand Agricultural Show which is held in Christchurch.

Hurunui District Council	Christchurch City Council	Timaru District Council	Ashburton District Council	Kaikoura District Council	Waimakariri District Council	Selwyn District Council	Mackenzie District Council	Waimate District Council
*Amberley	*Canterbury	Temuka & Geraldine	*Ashburton	Kaikōura	Northern Canterbury	Ellesmere	Mackenzie Country (Fairlie)	*Southern Canterbury
Cheviot	Duvauchelle	-	Mayfield	-	Oxford	Malvern	-	-
Hawarden	*Banks Peninsula	-	Methven	-	-	-	-	-
Amuri (not RAS affiliated)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Table 1: Canterbury A&P Associations in the RAS Central District, and their location within the different Territorial Authorities (District/City Councils) of the Canterbury region. Amuri is the only A&P Association in Canterbury that is not affiliated with the RAS. The five associations/shows included in this study are marked with an asterisk (*). Based on information from RAS, 2023c.

<p>Amberley</p> <p>The Association shall be for the promotion of the agriculture and pastoral interests and of industries connected to agriculture generally. The Association shall also encourage interest and involvement of the local community.</p>
<p>Ashburton</p> <p>To Promote discussion on subjects connected with Agriculture; the encouragement of Agriculture in general; breeding and general management of stock; the encouragement of local industries. Construction of farm buildings; the manufacture and improvement of implements; planting of trees; drainage, the general improvement of land; the advancement of the farming interests. Provide our buildings and opens spaces for other groups e.g. Equestrian, School Cross Country Days, Cancer Society Relay for Life Events.</p>
<p>Banks Peninsula</p> <p>Bringing together town and country by running an Agricultural & Pastoral Show where rural, lifestyle and urban communities have the opportunity to compete or show their stock or produce against other competitors in the same field.</p>
<p>Canterbury</p> <p>The Association's mission is to further the progress of agriculture in Canterbury and promoting excellence in agribusiness through quality and innovative exhibitions.</p>
<p>Southern Canterbury</p> <p>To encourage and awareness of agriculture by holding an annual agricultural fair as well as through other activities. To promote and enrich the quality of life of people in our community.</p>

Table 2: The charitable purpose of each A&P Association included in this study, as recorded in the Charities Register <https://www.charities.govt.nz/>

4. Canterbury A&P Shows and Showgrounds

Amberley Show

Amberley / Kōwai is located 50km north of Christchurch on State Highway One, and is the seat of the Hurunui District Council. The town is on the east coast of the Canterbury plains, with its economy in part based on providing services to the district's agricultural and horticultural industries (Hurunui District Council, 2023). At the 2018 census Amberley had an estimated population of 2,067 (StatsNZ, n.d.). Land uses cover a variety of agricultural activities, including cropping, livestock production, dairy and viticulture (North Canterbury, 2023).

The Amberley A&P Show has been held at the council-managed Amberley Domain since the formation of the Amberley A&P Association in 1900. The 121st Annual Amberley Show was held on 29th October 2022. Given Amberley's close proximity to Christchurch it attracts reasonably large visitor numbers in relation to the size of the township: approximately 6,000 people visitors attended in 2018 (Dangerfield, 2018).

The domain is located beside the community swimming pool and primary school. Landscaped with established European trees, the domain is a public space with a community hall, sporting facilities (for rugby, cricket, bowling and squash) and playgrounds. Amberley is a growing township, and there has been some residential development in the area directly surrounding the domain in recent years, although the majority of housing is to the west/south-west of the domain (see Figure 1). Hence, although it is held in an ostensibly rural setting, the recent residential growth in the local area coupled with good transport links via State Highway 1 make it easily accessible by people across the region, including those living in urban centres such as Christchurch.

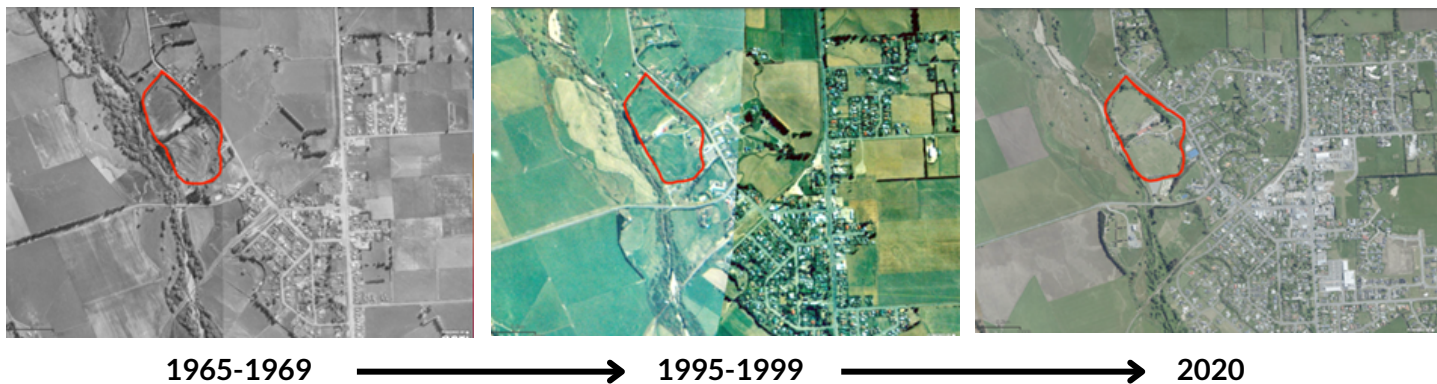


Figure 1: Aerial images of Amberley, with the Amberley domain circled in red. Images modified from historical aerial imagery available from <https://www.canterburymaps.govt.nz/>

Little River Show

Little River / Wairewa is located 45km south-east of Christchurch, and is in the district of the Christchurch City Council (CCC). The village sits at the base of the Ōkana valley with the surrounding rivers feeding into Lake Forsyth / Te Roto o Wairewa (Christchurch City Libraries, n.d.). At the 2018 census Little River had an estimated population of 279 (StatsNZ, n.d.). The village services local farms and tourists in Banks Peninsula.

The Little River A&P Show has been held at the council-managed Awa-Iti Domain in Little River since the Banks Peninsula A&P Association was formed in 1909. The Banks Peninsula A&P Association held its 111th Annual Show in Little River on 21st January 2023. There is no data available on visitor numbers to the show, but it seemed to be the smallest of the five shows visited over the 2022-23 summer period.

Awa-Iti Domain is located beside the fire station, community hall and school. Bordered with established European trees, the domain has a war memorial, several smaller community buildings and sporting facilities. Residential development does not appear to be encroaching on the area surrounding the domain, unsurprising given the small size of the village (see Figure 2). Hence, although it is a similar distance from Christchurch as Amberley, the Little River Show is much smaller than the Amberley Show and arguably has a more rural focus. Nevertheless, similarities between these two shows are evident in their location on council domains, thus positioning them at the heart of their local communities.

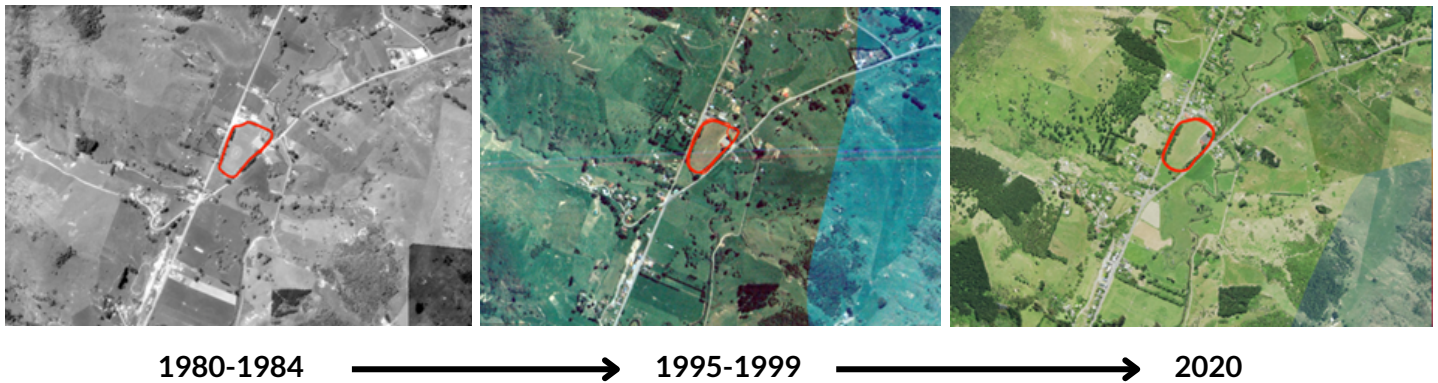


Figure 2: Aerial images of Little River, with the Awa-iti domain circled in red. Images modified from historical aerial imagery from <https://www.canterburymaps.govt.nz/>. Note that earlier images of this area are not available from this website.

Ashburton Show

Ashburton / Hakatere is a large town 85 km south-west of Christchurch, on the east-coast of the Ashburton plains, and is the seat of the Ashburton District Council. At the 2018 census Ashburton had an estimated population of 19,284 (StatsNZ, n.d.). Over the last 20 years, irrigation has transformed the district from sheep and grain growing to dairy farming. Irrigation now covers approximately 65 percent of the Ashburton District Plains, and dairy farming generates 63 percent of net farm income for the district (Roberts, 2022).

The Ashburton A&P Association formed in 1877 and held annual shows in Tinwald, then East Street, Ashburton before purchasing its present-day site on Brucefield Avenue in 1957 (Ashburton A&P Association, 2018). Ashburton’s 145th Annual Show was held on 28th-29th October 2022. Although there is no data available on visitor numbers to the show, it is promoted as “the largest two day annual agricultural event held in the Mid Canterbury District” (Ashburton A&P Association, 2018).

While the current showgrounds were originally on the periphery of the Ashburton township and surrounded largely by farmland, land use changes over the years have meant that they are now close to the town’s retail high-street, and are bordered by a cemetery, power station and residential housing (see Figure 3). Landscaped with established European trees, the showground’s 43 acres have extensive facilities including: a grandstand, a show ring, sheep pens, stables, pavilions and other utility buildings. During the year, these are hired out for a variety of activities, including equestrian events and rugby matches (Ashburton A&P Association, 2018). While this enables the Ashburton A&P Association to generate revenue throughout the year from what is now a centrally located site, this multi-functionality is similar to the year-round use of public domains that are used once a year for the Amberley Show and the Little River Show.

Southern Canterbury Show

In contrast to the three shows (and their respective A&P Associations) described so far, the Southern Canterbury Show is a relatively recent addition to the A&P Show calendar. This is because the Southern Canterbury A&P Association was formed from the amalgamation of two associations that were originally established in the region: the Timaru and Waimate A&P Associations.

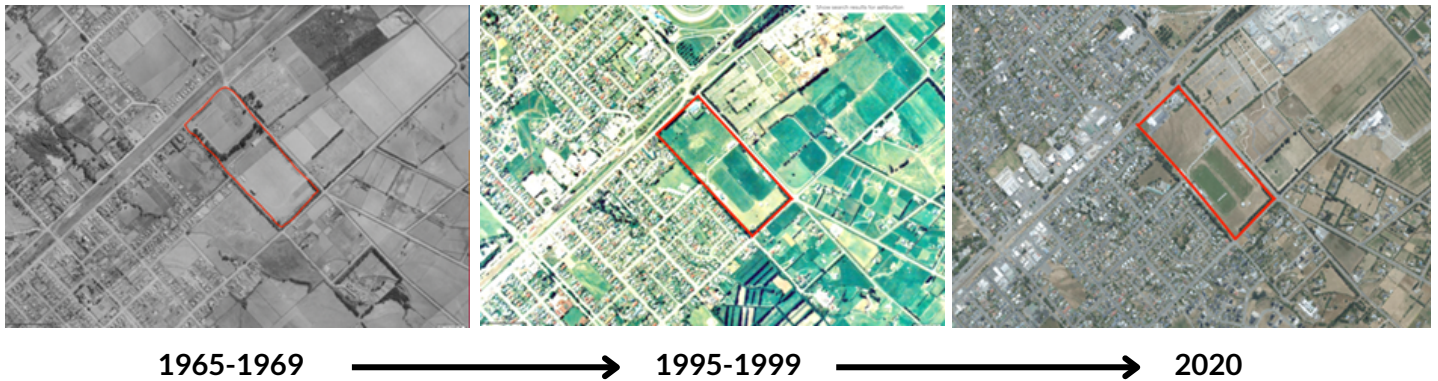


Figure 3: Aerial images of Ashburton, with the Ashburton showgrounds circled in red. Images modified from historical aerial imagery from <https://www.canterburymaps.govt.nz/>

The first Timaru A&P Show was held in 1866 on the corner of Theodosia and Elizabeth Streets (Stuff, 2009), what is now a central location in urban Timaru. It moved to a site on Wai-iti Rd from 1880-1897 before moving to a site north of the town centre in Smithfields (RootsWeb, n.d.). The 138th – and final – Timaru A&P Show was held in 2004; its demise has been attributed to a variety of factors such as declining revenue, declining support from competitors and public, and the show being perceived as an equestrian event (RootsWeb, n.d.). The showgrounds were sold to commercial developers in 2005 (Littlewood, 2020).

The Waimate A&P Association formed in 1882 and acquired its showgrounds shortly afterwards (Southern Canterbury A&P Association, n.d.). The showgrounds are on approximately 60 acres of land, located only 1.5km from the town centre of Waimate, a small town 200 km south of Christchurch and 46 km south of Timaru, just inland from the east coast. At the 2018 census Waimate had an estimated population of 3,456 (StatsNZ, n.d.), and is the seat of the Waimate District Council. Sheep farming was the main primary industry following European settlement (Davis & Dollimore, 1966). Present-day land uses encompass various forestry and farming activities; dairy farming has significantly increased and now occupies most irrigated land (Waimate District Council, 2014).

The first Southern Canterbury A&P Show was held at the Waimate showgrounds in 2011 (RootsWeb, n.d.). The showgrounds are surrounded by farmland, although recent housing developments are encroaching nearby (see Figure 4). Landscaped with established European trees, the showgrounds have extensive facilities, including stock yards, housing for over 500 horses, and a newly built large pavilion. The showgrounds are intended to serve the wider community throughout the year. Locals can harvest fruit and nuts from trees on the grounds, and building facilities are used to host events that allow the association to generate an income from the showgrounds and remain financially viable. These events, and the facilities required to run them, have changed in response to community requirements: sheep farming has declined in the area, leading to little need for sheep yards, while there has been a rise in demand for equine events and family celebrations such as weddings (Interview with Southern Canterbury Association Committee member, January 2023). These year-round uses of the Southern Canterbury A&P Showgrounds are similar to those of Ashburton, as described above. While these uses do not have an overt focus on agriculture, they support the financial stability of the A&P Association as a whole. Furthermore, these uses meet the needs of the local community, thus enabling A&P Associations to meet their broader charitable objectives, as highlighted in section 3.

Canterbury/New Zealand Agricultural Show

Christchurch / Ōtautahi is the largest city in the South Island of Aotearoa New Zealand and the seat of Environment Canterbury Regional Council and the CCC. Christchurch lies in the middle of the South Island's east-coast, east of the Canterbury Plains and just north of Banks Peninsula. At the 2018 census the city had an estimated population 369,006 (StatsNZ, n.d.). Agriculture has always been central to the Christchurch economy, followed by manufacturing and tourism (OECD, 2015).

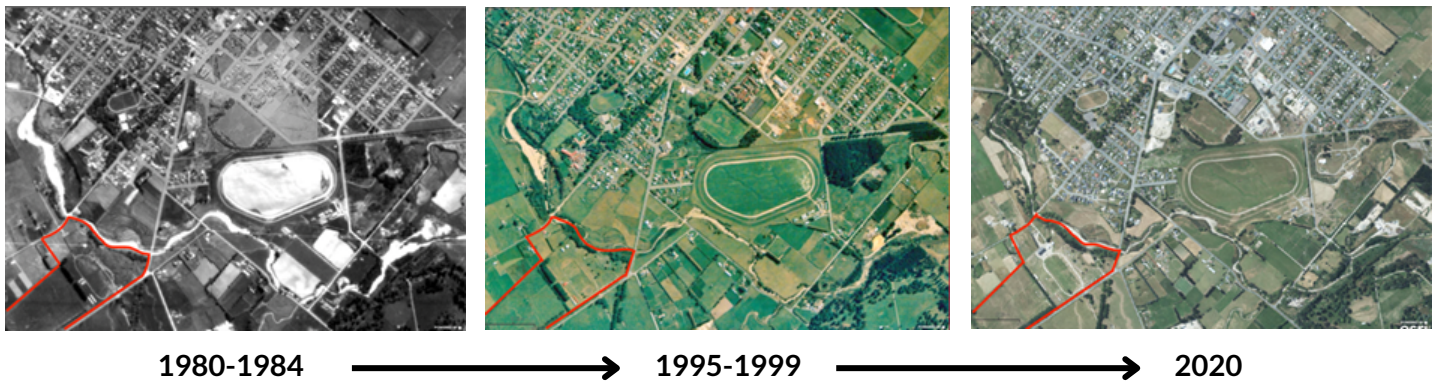


Figure 4: Aerial image of Waimate, with the Waimate showgrounds circled in red. Image modified from historical aerial imagery from <https://www.canterburymaps.govt.nz/>. Note that earlier images of this area are not available from this website.

The Canterbury A&P Show is the largest and longest running show included in this study, and its showgrounds have also undergone the most significant changes during its more than 150-year history. In 2018 the Canterbury A&P Show was rebranded as the New Zealand Agricultural Show, although it is still organised by the Canterbury A&P Association (CAPA, n.d.-a). The 159th New Zealand Agricultural Show was held on 9th-11th November 2022.

Christchurch hosted its first agricultural show in 1862 in a paddock north of Latimer Square (CAPA, n.d.-b), which now lies within the city's Central Business District (see Figure 5). The Canterbury A&P Association was founded in 1863 and it bought a showground of 14 acres in Sydenham, which later became Sydenham Park (see Figure 5). The Canterbury A&P Association rapidly grew in strength and the Sydenham showgrounds site was developed with buildings for livestock, exhibits, offices and landscaped with European trees (Shiels, 2012).

By 1886 the Sydenham site became too small, and the association bought a site in Addington which served as the showgrounds for another 110 years (Shiels, 2012; see Figure 5). The showgrounds moved again in 1996 when the Canterbury A&P Association acquired a 250-acre block on Curletts Road, Wigram from the CCC (CAPA, n.d.-b). Named Canterbury Agricultural Park, the Wigram site became New Zealand's first purpose-built show facility (see Figure 5 and Figure 6). A grant of \$1.2 million from the New Zealand Lottery Board assisted in the extensive earthworks and construction of the new site. The Treasurer's Hut, which has heritage status, was relocated from Addington forming a tangible link to the Association's long heritage (Shiels, 2012). The new site opened in 1997 after thousands of European oaks, plane trees and chestnut trees had been planted, the operations manager stating the site would become another Hagley Park (Cronshaw, 2022).

Canterbury Agricultural Park provides facilities that serve the primary industries of Canterbury and hosts many events including regular livestock sales, horse shows, show-jumping and the annual A&P Show (CAPA, n.d.-a). It is also used for junior rugby league, riding for the disabled, vehicle expos, weddings and the Christchurch Santa Parade (from 2022). In a typical year there might be over 30 events held onsite (CAPA, n.d.-a). In 2001, Canterbury Agricultural Park was re-acquired by the CCC, except for the five-acre Canterbury Saleyards Company site, which the Canterbury A&P association retained in ownership (Shiels, 2012). The association also retained ownership of the buildings and improvements on a lease agreement with the CCC, and is licensed to occupy the entire park for the show period each year (CCC, 2015). This “hybrid” ownership model sits somewhere between the two observed so far, sharing characteristics with the public domains used for the Amberley and Little River Shows, and the privately owned showgrounds used for the Ashburton and Southern Canterbury Shows. Interestingly, there is again a focus on multi-functional, year-round use of the Canterbury Showgrounds, which is arguably even more necessary given its relatively urban location: as evident in Figure 6, although the Wigram site was originally on the periphery of Christchurch, this area has recently seen a rapid increase in residential development.



Figure 5: Aerial image of Christchurch showing the four different showground sites of the Canterbury A&P Show circled in red. In historical order of use these are: 1 Latimer Square, CBD; 2 Sydenham; 3 Addington; 4 Wigram. Image modified from aerial imagery from <https://www.linz.govt.nz/>

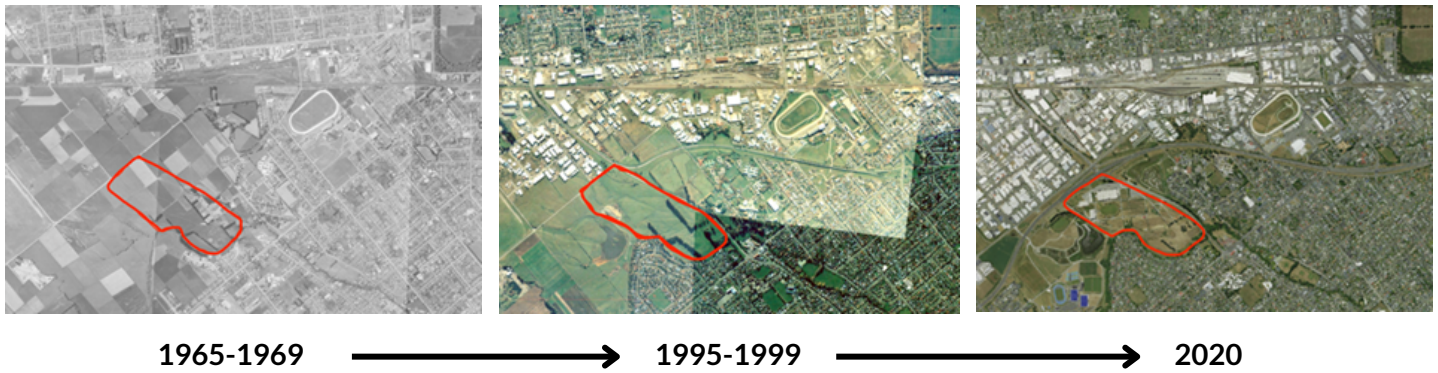


Figure 6: Aerial image of Wigram, Christchurch with the Canterbury Agricultural Park circled in red. Image modified from historical aerial imagery from <https://www.canterburymaps.govt.nz/>

5. Discussion

The establishment of A&P Associations in New Zealand during the early settler-colonial period was strongly tied to the running of an annual show, and many A&P Associations purchased showgrounds for this purpose. This model of ownership was evident in two of the shows included in this study: Southern Canterbury and Ashburton. In direct contrast, two shows were held at council-managed public domains: Amberley and Little River. Our account also reveals that hybrid ownership models can also occur, as with the Canterbury A&P Association which leases the showgrounds it once owned from the Christchurch City Council, but retains ownership of buildings and improvements.

Regardless of the specific model of land ownership followed, it appears that all showgrounds are multi-functional spaces that can accommodate diverse groups and activities. A&P Association-owned showgrounds do not sit empty for the majority of the year: numerous events are held on them in order to provide an important source of income for the association, and showground infrastructure is therefore developed with these additional events in mind. This focus on multi-functionality also applies to Canterbury Agricultural Park and council-managed public domains, which are used by numerous community groups and sports clubs throughout the year. As we have observed, these non-agricultural uses enable A&P Associations to meet their broader charitable objectives by providing spaces for community events and gatherings. They may also contribute to keeping A&P Associations alive in the public consciousness beyond the annual show, which could in turn help build trust-based relationships that are necessary for social licence (e.g. Edwards & Trafford, 2016; Moffat & Zhang, 2014).

Our account also reveals that showgrounds have shifted locations over the years. In some cases this has been due to the need from more space, therefore requiring a move away from a more central urban location. This is evident in the history of the Canterbury A&P Show and the Ashburton A&P Show. The early history of the Timaru A&P Show also follows this pattern; but its recent amalgamation with the Waimate A&P Show to form the Southern Canterbury A&P Show suggests that financial pressures on A&P Associations can be the driving factor for showground movements and associated sale of property. Interestingly, the local council appears to have benefited from the sale of the Timaru A&P Showgrounds. Timaru District Holdings Limited (TDHL), a council owned organisation, acquired the Smithfields site in 2017 for \$6.296 million (Littlewood, 2021). TDHL then sold 9.9 hectares of the 12ha site to Auckland-based developer Redwood Group in 2020 for \$6.4 million

and gave consent for a 34,000 sqm commercial shopping centre development on the site without public consultation (Littlewood, 2020a, 2021). Questions, protests and objections have been raised concerning the council's role in the ownership, resale, commercial redevelopment and consent processes of the site (Littlewood, 2020b).

The experience in Timaru stands in contrast to interactions between the CCC and the Canterbury A&P Association. The CCC, through its subsidiary promotional company Christchurch NZ Ltd, provided the Canterbury A&P association with a vital \$1 million loan in 2022 (Malthus, 2022). This indicates that local councils may provide grants and funding to assist A&P Associations with their show activities, rather than benefit from sale of their assets if they run into financial difficulties. Furthermore, although the relationship with local councils is not a key focus of analysis in the emerging literature on social licence to farm, it does appear to be important for A&P Associations as they negotiate a place for A&P Shows.

6. Conclusions

As place-based annual events, A&P Shows represent rather unique opportunities to bring together farming and non-farming communities across the urban-rural continuum. Prior research demonstrates that visitors experience a range of activities that promote a positive image of and sense of trust in agriculture (Holloway, 2004; Larsen, 2017), and are therefore important places for negotiating a social licence to farm (Edwards et al., 2024; Beban et al., 2023; Vallance & Edwards, 2023). Based on our analysis of five A&P showgrounds in the Canterbury region, our research indicates that the places where A&P Shows are held are also subject to negotiation. This is evident in changes in their location over time, different ownership structures and relationships with local councils, and infrastructure to enable multiple uses by the local community.

While there are practical reasons for the relocation of various showgrounds, the moves highlight potential parallels between their displacement and the place of farming in contemporary New Zealand. Agriculture occupied a privileged – and essential – position in the early establishment of New Zealand's settler-colonial society (see e.g. Pawson, 2010). Yet, when the United Kingdom joined the European Union in 1974, other industries and sectors were promoted, and new markets were sought. What was formerly indisputable – the right to farm, and to farm in distinctively colonial ways – has, over the last 50 years, become subject to numerous challenges that is leading some to question whether agriculture in New Zealand has a social licence (Booth et al., 2024). It is perhaps unsurprising, therefore, that A&P Shows are also having to negotiate their own place in New Zealand society.

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