Halwell Quarry is a unique park, with an unusual combination of recreational walks, historic sites and botanical collections. Important historical buildings from the quarryman’s days are being preserved. The once noisy rock face is now a quiet amphitheatre facing onto a parkland with short walks and wetland ponds.

There is excellent car parking, toilets and picnic areas. A walk goes around the dramatic quarry face and there is a network of walking trails throughout the reserve. The visitor centre is closed until earthquake repairs are completed.

Six individual areas are being developed to represent the special character and beauty of Christchurch’s Sister Cities. These are: Adelaide (South Australia), Christchurch (England), Gansu Province (China), Kurashiki (Japan), Seattle (USA), and Songpa-Gu (Seoul, Korea).

The Sister City plant collections are still in their infancy, but extensive planting of indigenous species is being undertaken and there are seats and sculptures throughout the park.

**Education services**

The ranger staff conduct guided walks for interest groups. School groups are given a free educational overview of the park and its history — bookings are essential.

**Native Plant Revegetation**

Volunteers such as local residents service clubs and youth groups are assisting with the tree planting on the park. If you would like to help please contact the ranger.

**History of the quarry**

The quarry was first worked in the 1860’s and produced a fine and distinctive blue-grey stone which can be seen in many of the city’s prominent buildings including the Canterbury Museum, Provincial Council Chambers and the old Sydenham Post Office.

In 1865 a wooden tramline was built for eleven kilometres from the quarry to Sydenham, but it was abandoned eight years later. In 1890 the first crushing plant was installed and the crater, you see today, began to appear. Output from the quarry increased dramatically for a while, but by 1921 the quarry was almost bankrupt again.

Then the Christchurch City Council bought the quarry, restored its productivity and ran it successfully until 1990 when the reserve of usable rock was exhausted. Despite the high cost of carting rock to the city, the Halwell Quarry had a long life of 130 years and is believed to have been the oldest, continually operating quarry in Australasia.

**Historic buildings**

The buildings you see today were all part of the working quarry. The workshops built in 1912 housed a newer, bigger crushing plant. The single men’s house (now visitor centre) was built in 1921 to replace the wooden one that was destroyed by fire in 1920.

Paterson House above the main entrance was built in 1927 for the then manager, Mr Ned Paterson and also as a show home to demonstrate how the quarry stone could be utilised.

**Access**

Halwell Quarry Park is 10km from Cathedral Square, via either Halwell Road, Sparks Road or Cashmere Road, then 1km along Kennedy's Bush Road.

Nearest bus route: No. 7 - Halwell/Kennedy's Bush

**Picnic areas and facilities**

There are two main areas for informal and organised group picnics. The inner quarry natural amphitheatre provides a sheltered site and an open grassland is enclosed by quarry walls. This site is an ideal venue for larger outdoor functions. The other main picnic area is the Findlay’s Farm site, surrounded by old walnut trees. There is also a petanque pitch, visitor centre, toilets and drinking fountains.

**Quarry restoration**

The Christchurch City Council decided to restore the quarry as a passive recreation reserve, wildlife habitat and an educational resource. The strikingly sculptural and geologically interesting rock faces of the quarry were retained. A huge planting programme was undertaken with over 250,000 trees and shrubs planted.

**Sister Cities botanical collections**

The Sister Cities’ gardens project involved developing botanical collections that reflect native plants from Christchurch’s six Sister Cities, as well as from Canterbury, NZ. The landscaping of the areas has been determined after extensive consultation with each of our Sister Cities and plants within each area are all natives of their respective regions.

Each botanical collection has 1,000 square metres of land, suitting the plant types from around each Sister City region. This enables many diverse species of plant to be grown within a small distance of each other. Groundwork started in early 1999 and the first trees were ceremoniously planted in June that year.

**Walks**

The Rim Track is a round trip of about 40 minutes, which follows the quarry crater rim and affords panoramic views of the Southern Alps and the city. Information panels depict the workings and historic features of the quarry and viewing platforms, while seating provides ideal resting points along the route.

The track (suitable for all ages) descends to Findlays picnic area and back to the main car park. There are links to Kennedy’s Bush Road car park and track.

**Further information**

For further information on this or other Christchurch parks contact:

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