



A big crowd packed Lancaster Park for the All Blacks test against France in 1968. Photo - V.C. Browne and Son.

THE REDEVELOPMENT OF FOUR GREAT OLD RUGBY GROUNDS OVER THE PAST TWO DECADES MIRRORS THE EPIC JOURNEY OF COMMERCIAL PROPERTY CHRONICLED BY 100 ISSUES OF TOTAL PROPERTY.

AROUND THE TIME THE FIRST ISSUE of *Total Property* went to print, the All Blacks ran on to Athletic Park for the last time. In the two decades since, the hallowed Wellington ground and famous international rugby stadiums in three other main centres have shut their gates to the crowds.

“Century-old rugby grounds at Athletic Park, Lancaster Park and Carisbrook, and rugby league’s Carlaw Park, have been redeveloped for uses spanning every major asset class of commercial real estate,” says Ryan Johnson, Bayleys’ national director commercial and industrial.

“This includes fast-rising ‘alternative’ assets like student accommodation, retirement housing, healthcare and childcare, whose emergence at these sites reflects the rapidly changing demographics and market dynamics

that have taken these towards the investment mainstream.”

Johnson says the sites’ underlying real estate fundamentals – with expansive, flat land in close proximity to key transport routes, residential populations, business catchments or industrial precincts – made each of them ripe for commercial or industrial development.

“These great old grounds bred timeless sporting memories, but their journey since the crowds moved on makes them a microcosm of the commercial property scene. Their redevelopment mirrors the changing face of the sector through the first two decades of the 21st century.”

To mark the 100th edition of New Zealand’s leading commercial property magazine, *Total Property* revisited the famous grounds to chart their commercial property story after the crowds departed.

LANCASTER PARK, CHRISTCHURCH

ALSO KNOWN AS	Jade Stadium; AMI Stadium
CAPACITY AT CLOSURE	39,000
OPENED	1881 (cricket and athletics)
FIRST TEST	1913 – Australia 16, All Blacks 5
LAST TEST	2010 – All Blacks 20, Australia 10
MEMORABLE MOMENT	“Spear tackle” on Lions great Brian O’Driscoll minutes into first test in 2005
LAND AREA	Six hectares
ZONING	Open space metropolitan facilities
COMMERCIAL PROPERTY DEVELOPMENT	Community playing fields and sports pavilion proposed. Rubble from demolished stands reused in mixed-use development in Rangiora

Lancaster Park had an inauspicious start when Australia pipped the All Blacks in the stadium’s first test in 1913. It met a sad and unexpected end when it was damaged beyond repair by the 2011 Christchurch earthquake. The stadium had just emerged from a big makeover for games it would never host later that year in the Rugby World Cup. The intervening 98 years were the stuff of rugby legend.

In recent decades, Lancaster Park was a fortress of Canterbury domination with multiple Super Rugby titles, and before that a then-record Ranfurly Shield tenure brought to an end by Auckland in a game for the ages in 1985.

The park became the eye of a storm when, minutes into the first 2005 Lions test, Tana Umaga and Keven Mealamu ended Lions captain Brian O’Driscoll’s tour with an alleged spear tackle. The ground also hosted cricket for many years and was the scene of New Zealand’s first test win over Australia. Deans and Hadlee stands attested to revered local dynasties in both sports.

The venue also hosted athletics, rock concerts, visits by the Queen and US evangelist Billy Graham. Champion runner Peter Snell broke two world records here in 1962.

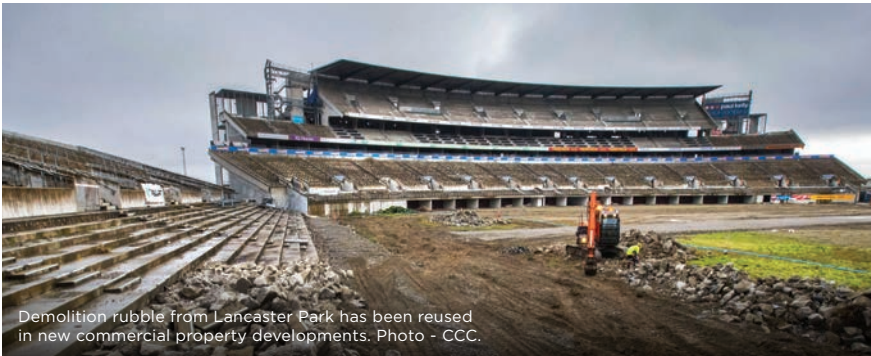
Lancaster Park has since ceded rugby by to a temporary arena in Addington, pending development of a \$473 million, 25,000-seat roofed stadium in the central city. Demolition of the old ground was completed in 2019, excluding the 1924 heritage-listed war memorial gates on Stevens Street.

The six hectares of council-owned land lies two kilometres south-east of the Christchurch CBD, bordered by medium-density housing on one side and elsewhere by light and heavy industrial real estate. It has a 2019 rating valuation of \$6.6 million, but genuine commercial development is not an option.

Zoned “Open Space Metropolitan Facilities”, its use is restricted to sports, recreation and community gatherings – activities for which the land was dedicated to commemorate soldiers killed in World War I. Christchurch City

Council proposes new playing fields and a possible sports pavilion. Yet the old stadium is still giving life to new commercial property. Some 59,000 tonnes of demolished concrete has been re-used in a new mixed-use development in Rangiora whose early proposals included a museum, hotel, brewery and retail space.

This was part of the extensive reuse and recycling of materials from what was one of New Zealand’s largest demolition projects. Less than two percent of materials removed during the stadium’s deconstruction went to landfill, according to the council.



ATHLETIC PARK, WELLINGTON

ALSO KNOWN AS	Home of New Zealand Rugby; The Park
CAPACITY AT CLOSURE	39,000
OPENED	1896
FIRST TEST	1904 – New Zealand 9, Lions 3
LAST TEST	1999 – All Blacks 54, France 7
MEMORABLE MOMENT	“The perfect 80 minutes” 43-6 win over the Wallabies in the wet in 1996
LAND AREA	4.7 hectares
ZONING	Residential
COMMERCIAL PROPERTY DEVELOPMENT	Village at the Park retirement village, run by Arvida; plus a 150-place early learning centre



Athletic Park was New Zealand’s home of rugby and the spiritual home of the All Blacks since before the national team was even known by that name. Opened on 6 April 1896 on a former dairy farm, “The Park” was the scene of some of the great test encounters. For years All Blacks teams were named in the bowels of the Main Stand after the final national trial was played out on the pitch.

But it was the towering, seemingly teetering two-tier Millard Stand that many fans will best remember. Standing at the crest of a hill between Rintoul Street and Adelaide Road, it was a commanding landmark on the solidly residential Berhampore skyline.

Those streets saw fierce clashes between riot police and protesters during the 1981 Springbok tour.

The stadium hosted visits by royalty and the pope and concerts by the likes of U2, David Bowie and Dire Straits.

In 1999 it held its last rugby test: a drubbing of France with a half-century score line and hat trick of tries by Tana Umaga that left the scoreboard reading like cricket. The ground closed later that year, replaced by a stadium dubbed “The Cake Tin” on surplus railway land just north of the CBD.

In 2002, Athletic Park’s Māori owners, the Wellington Tenth’s Trust, entered a partnership to develop the Village at the Park retirement village, along with

a 150-place early childhood education centre now known as The Park, in a joint venture with the Hurst-Pratley group. The village has been run by NZX-listed Arvida since 2017, when it took a 50 percent stake as part of a \$106 million acquisition of three villages.

The 4.7-hectare site was progressively developed over the years, and Village at the Park is now marketed as a comprehensive lifestyle village.

It offers independent two and three-bedroom villas, one and two-bedroom apartments and specialised facilities including two care suites, 10 rest home beds, 42 hospital beds and 33 dementia

care beds. An on-site community centre features a cinema, beauty salon, chapel and gym. The final 24-apartment block was completed in 2019.

In a nod to its stadium heritage, Village at the Park features a Millard Household and care facility wings named after two women with a long-standing involvement with Athletic Park: Mary Coleman and Rawinia Buchanan.

The full site, including retirement village and early learning centre, has a rating valuation dating to September 2018 of \$62 million.



CARISBROOK, DUNEDIN

ALSO KNOWN AS	House of Pain; The Brook
CAPACITY AT CLOSURE	30,000
OPENED	1883
FIRST TEST	1908 – All Blacks 32, Lions 5
LAST TEST	2011 – All Blacks 60, Fiji 14
MEMORABLE MOMENT	West Indies paceman Michael Holding kicks down the stumps in a dramatic cricket test in 1980
LAND AREA	Three hectares
ZONING	Industrial
COMMERCIAL PROPERTY DEVELOPMENT	Industrial warehouse/office/showroom on part of site, leased to Fletcher Steel. Further development planned

Nestled in a triangle bordered by an industrial precinct, suburban housing and Dunedin’s main transport corridor in otherwise sleepy Caversham, the “House of Pain” rang true to its intimidating moniker for visiting sides. Of 38 All Blacks tests played here over 103 years, just five were lost.

One of the most memorable was the 36-3 humbling of England in 2004, in the sides’ first match-up after England were crowned world champions. It was the first test in a 15-year Graham Henry/Steve

Hansen coaching era that would yield two world cups.

The ground also hosted international cricket. It saw controversy when West Indian fast bowler Michael Holding kicked down the stumps after an unsuccessful appeal in a dramatic New Zealand test win in 1980.

Dunedin’s student population lent “The Brook” a unique atmosphere, particularly on the terraces where exuberant scarfies were known to bring, and on at least one occasion set fire to,

their own couches at cricket matches. After 128 years of service, the venue was retired and replaced by a \$224 million multi-use covered stadium in Dunedin North, which opened in time to host four matches in the 2011 Rugby World Cup. Carisbrook’s location on Industrial-zoned land – opposite the Hillside rail workshops, beside the main trunk line and State Highway 1, and close to South Dunedin’s big-box retail outlets – made it ripe for industrial development.

The Otago Rugby Union sold it to Dunedin City Council, who on-sold the three-hectare property for \$3.5 million in 2013 to developer Calder Stewart Group which demolished the stands. The turnstile building on Neville Street, a category 1-listed historic place, was retained.

A single-storey, 3,875-square metre warehouse with a 302-square metre office plus yard has been built on one corner of the site, in what was said to be stage one of a larger development.

The warehouse and showroom is tenanted by Fletcher Steel, bringing together Fletcher Reinforcing, Easysteel and Dimond Roofing, as a base to service the city’s busy construction pipeline.

The industrial area is set for a further boost with work underway to revamp the Hillside workshops as a mechanical hub and heavy engineering facility to service KiwiRail trains, backed by \$20 million from the previous Government’s Provincial Growth Fund.

Calder Stewart sold the Carisbrook property last year into the new FortHill Property real estate investment fund.



A warehouse, office and yard tenanted by Fletcher Steel has been developed on the Carisbrook site.



In its heyday Carlaw Park held over 25,000 fans, Kiwis versus Great Britain test 1958. Photo - A Turnbull Library



The All Blacks’ final test at Athletic Park in 1999 gave way to a commercial property transformation. Photo - A Turnbull Library.

CARLAW PARK, AUCKLAND

ALSO KNOWN AS	Home of New Zealand Rugby League
CAPACITY AT CLOSURE	17,000
OPENED	1916
FIRST TEST	1924 – Kiwis 16, England 8
LAST TEST	1999 – Kiwis 74, Tonga 0
MEMORABLE MOMENT	18-0 demolition of Wally Lewis’ world-champion Kangaroos in 1985
LAND AREA	Approximately three hectares
ZONING	Business – Mixed Use
COMMERCIAL PROPERTY DEVELOPMENT	Mixed-use precinct including commercial offices, hotel/serviced apartments, retail, car parking, childcare centre and student accommodation

Many league fans will remember Auckland’s Carlaw Park as a rough diamond, particularly in its later years. But the tight configuration of its ageing stands afforded a closeness to the action that loyal fans said intensified the experience.

The ground hosted 66 rugby league tests between 1924 and 1999, including a number of world cup fixtures. Perhaps its greatest result came in 1985, when the Graham Lowe-coached Kiwis scorched Wally Lewis’ world-champion Kangaroos 18-0 in front of 15,000 screaming fans. It was the first time the Australians had been held scoreless in nearly three decades.

After its closure in 2002, the park stood empty for several years but its forlorn state belied its enormous real estate potential.

Wedged between a burgeoning CBD and university precinct and the wealthy suburban catchment of Parnell, close to a major motorway interchange and a short walk from Parnell train station, it was prized real estate whose value rose as the CBD and urban population swelled.

Early development proposals included retirement accommodation, and the site was considered for the proposed Stadium New Zealand for the 2011 Rugby World Cup.

Its ultimate destiny was as a pin-up for urban renewal, and it was developed over ensuing years as a vibrant mixed-use hub – supported by Business – Mixed Use zoning encouraging medium-density development on the city fringe.



The Carlaw Park mixed-use precinct includes offices, a hotel, car parking, cafes and a student village.

Redevelopment has seen the construction of dual four-storey commercial buildings, with a combined 11,400 square metres of lettable floor space – occupied by tenants including Nestlé, the Department of Internal Affairs and Jacobs engineering consultancy. The property also houses a Lollipops childcare centre licensed for 60 children.

An adjacent building is occupied by commercial accommodation provider Quest, with 41 serviced apartments including studios, one and two-bedroom apartments, along with ground-floor retail/hospitality offerings and a Wilson carpark with over 600 spaces.

Completed in 2009, these buildings were developed by a partnership

involving McDougall Reidy, Haydn & Rollett and Direct Property Fund (now NZX-listed Property for Industry (PFI), which currently owns them). Their combined value was estimated last year at around \$100 million.

PFI has said it intends to sell its Carlaw Park assets to intensify its focus on industrial property.

Further development in the precinct saw completion in 2016 of the University of Auckland’s Carlaw Park Student Village, which houses 700 residents in a combination of two, three and four-bedroom apartments. A further 10-storey student apartment building is set to add another 900 beds by 2023 on a nearby site on Stanley Street.