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MEDIA RELEASE

Celebrating South Canterbury's heritage of water

The flow-on effect of Timaru's early water supply has been recorded and celebrated in time for World Heritage Day on 18 April.

The theme for this year's ICOMOS (International Council for Monuments and Sites) World Heritage Day is *'The Heritage of Water'*. The New Zealand Historic Places Trust (NZHPT) and South Canterbury Museum have joined together to produce an online audiovisual presentation of the making of Timaru's water supply.

The presentation includes interviews recorded by NZHPT staff members Zoe Roland and Robyn Burgess in conversation with local landowners and historians while touring the Pareora Dam, water courses and reservoir. The interviews have been overlaid against contemporary and historical photographs from the South Canterbury Museum collection.

The South Canterbury Museum's website (www.timaru.govt.nz/explore.html) will host this event which will be launched on World Heritage Day (18 April) and will continue throughout 2011.

"As the audiovisual presentation shows, it was these early water systems which allowed Timaru's population and industry to grow and flourish," says Zoe.

"Water was, and still is, the lifeblood to any community. The ingenious ways water was used to help set Timaru on a path to prosperity is quite a story."

Engineering feats included damming the river so water could fill a large reservoir to service the growing Timaru township. Farmers also had to rely on collecting rainwater on roofs and tanks and damming gullies for household, stock and irrigation purposes.

"The dam and water courses were completed in 1881 and served the city until 1939, while the reservoir was in use until 1960 when a new one was built at Claremont. As a source of renewable energy it was a highly effective system – the water travelling from the dam approximately 16km to the people of Timaru by natural gravity alone."

This project has been partially funded by the Timaru District Council.

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