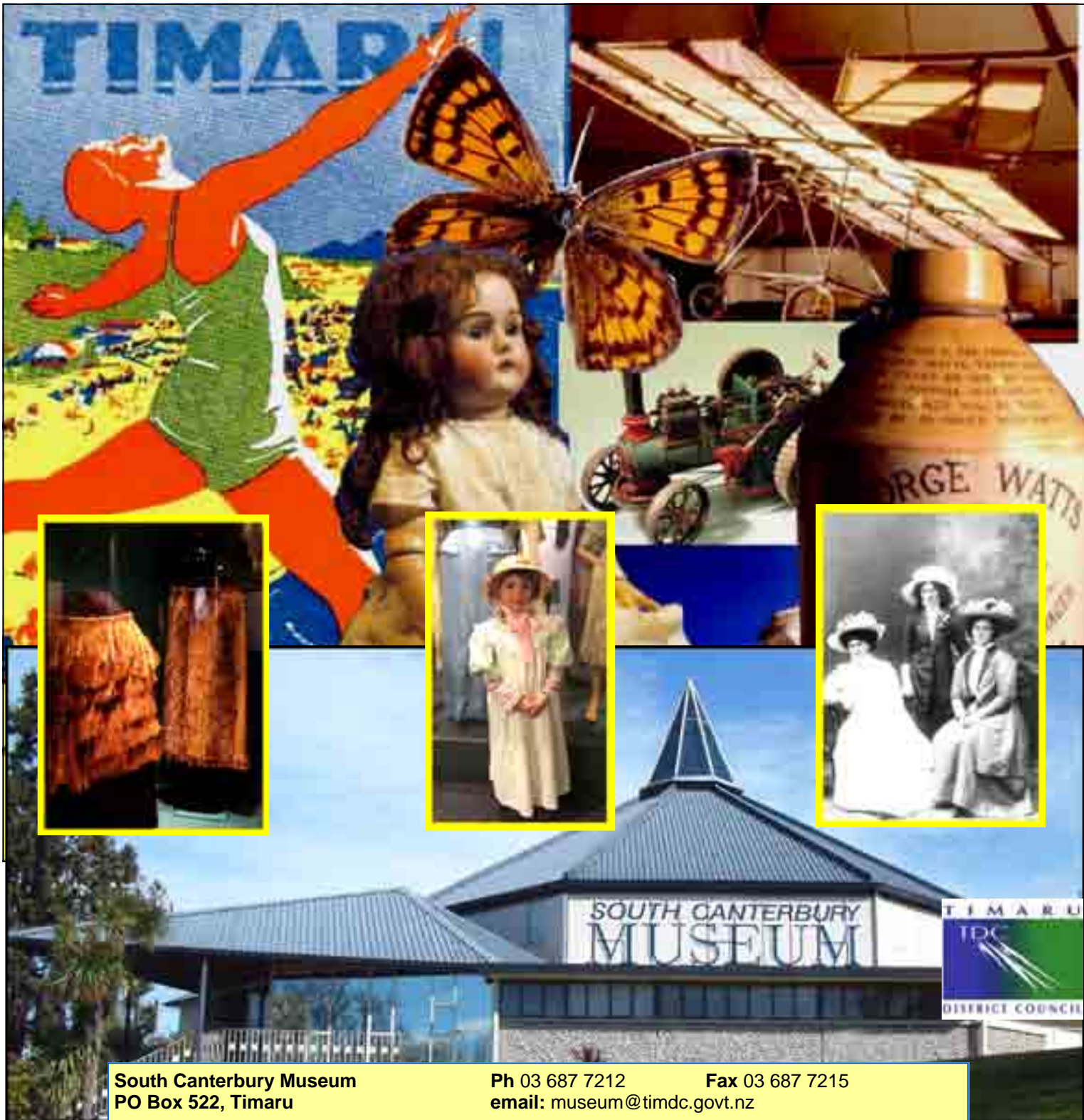


A guide to the work of the

SOUTH CANTERBURY MUSEUM

Explore our heritage



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What is the Museum all about?

The South Canterbury Museum has a focus on the nature and history of the South Canterbury region. It aims to collect, preserve and document objects, images and information that reflect this focus, and to make these resources available to the public through exhibitions, education programmes, publications and research access. Putting it simply, the Museum's role is *preserving our past, telling our stories*.

Some facts and figures

Who works there?

Fulltime staff	Museum Director Curator of Collections Curator of Documentary History 2 Museum educators (LEOTC project)
Part-time staff	Technician Cleaner 3 weekend supervisors
Temporary staff	Taskforce green workers Museum interns
Volunteers	6-8 people ranging from 3 - 26 hours per week each, totalling up to 50 - 60 hours per week.



Who owns the Museum?

The South Canterbury Museum is owned and operated by the Timaru District Council. The Museum was originally established by the South Canterbury Historical Society in 1952 in a house on land bequeathed by the late TD Burnett in 1941. A new building, Pioneer Hall, was built on the site in 1966. The Museum was jointly administered by the Society and the Timaru City Council until 1988 when it became part of the community services of the Timaru District Council.

The Council fund the Museum's operation, with additional operational funding obtained through a Ministry of Education grant, donations and sales.

The Historical Society is still involved as the Friends of the Museum. Members receive newsletters and invitations to Museum events, and act as supporters for the Museum in the wider community.

The South Canterbury Museum Development Trust was established to assist with fundraising for special projects. It has raised over \$300,000 for extending the Museum building and establishing the Heritage Theatre in the Museum's classroom.

Who are the Museum's users?

The Museum is a resource that is widely used by locals, visitors to Timaru, and distance researchers. The Museum's services are provided at the Museum as well as around the region, through the Heritage Education Programme, staff and volunteer talks, and similar programmes. The main groups of users, along with 2008 numbers are:

◆ On-site visitors	12,716
◆ On-site school groups	2,536
◆ Off-site school classes and other groups	2,820
◆ On-site research users	1,003
◆ Distance research users	311
Total	19,386

Museum user numbers have tripled since 1990, and continue to grow. This is due in particular to a greater interest in local heritage, internet access, tourism, the Museum's growing educational role and overall increase in the Museum's profile.



What the Museum does: *preserving our past*

Collections of objects, images and information are at the heart of the Museum and all of its activities. These collections are the raw material for the study, display, teaching and exploration of our region's nature and history.

Much effort has been put in to developing the collections, documenting them and ensuring that they are kept safe from deterioration. The Museum has a huge range of local specimens, artefacts and records in its collections, making up an irreplaceable resource of great value to our region.

What has the Museum got?

The collections are extensive and diverse. Natural history collections include local rocks and fossils, bones from moa and other extinct creatures, insects, mounted bird and animal skins, and sea creatures such as shells. Human history collections include local Maori archaeological material, artefacts from nineteenth century Maori and European communities, and a wealth of social history material, including costume and textiles, toys, household items and other every-day items from the 19th and 20th centuries. The documentary history collections include photographs, archives, newspapers, books and other sources of information about our region and its people.

Where does the stuff come from?

Most of the items in the Museum's collections have been generously donated by the public since collecting began in the early 1940s. The Museum aims to collect material that reflects the themes of our region's nature and history. Today there are over 46,000 documented records on the Museum's collection database. These can include tiny insects, books, large pieces of furniture, or extensive series of archival records. The total number of items in the Museum is in the hundreds of thousands.



What do we do with it all?

The Museum's collections are an important and valuable resource. Collection items are stored in the Museum's Collection Wing, where they are organised in a way to aid their preservation and retrieval. All collection items are catalogued, often with images, on the Museum's **Pastperfect** database system. This enables Museum staff and volunteers to keep track of what we have, where everything is, what information is known about it and which items might need attention for further care, or be useful for an exhibition or education programme.

Particular care is needed to protect fragile items from light exposure, dust, chemical damage, insect or mould attack, and stresses and strains that could cause damage. Special boxes, padding foams and acid-free tissues and papers are used to protect and house items when not in use.

Most of the items in the collections are not on display at any one time. By ensuring that they are stored and documented correctly, the Museum can locate and retrieve items when they are needed for viewing, display, or study. This fulfils the Museum's prime role of preserving our past to make it accessible.



What the Museum does: *telling our stories*

Research

The stored collections are a treasure trove of information for anyone researching local nature or history. In particular, the rich collections of documents, photographs, local history publications and information sources are very useful for family historians, authors, researchers and students looking for local information. Modern reprographic techniques allow copies of most things to be easily made. Material belonging to the South Canterbury Branch of the New Zealand Society of Genealogists is also housed in the Museum's research library.



Exhibition

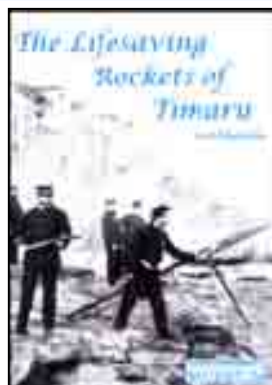
The Museum's exhibition areas focus on our region's nature and history, and allow visitors to explore our heritage with objects, images and information drawn from the Museum's collections. The exhibitions explore local geology and wildlife, Maori history, the arrival of European settlers, and the region's social history from the 1860s to the present day.

A temporary display area provides a place for changing exhibitions that provide a varying menu of topics. Many of these exhibitions are developed using items from the Museum's stored collections, while others are drawn from elsewhere.



Education

South Canterbury Museum is a key resource for local schools. The Museum houses the Heritage Education Service, funded by the Ministry of Education, which provides curriculum-linked programmes for schools both at the Museum and throughout the region at a range of other museums and heritage sites. Several thousand students use this service each year, and have the opportunity to experience local nature and history in a way that no book or website can provide.



Publications

The Museum has begun to produce an number of small books in collaboration with local researchers and authors. These provide readers with a more in-depth look at aspects of our region's past.

In addition, Museum staff regularly contribute articles to local newspapers and national magazines that further explore and promote our local heritage.