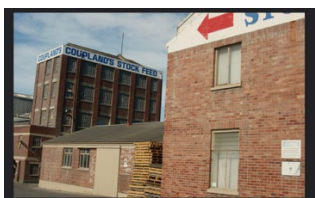


TIMARU DISTRICT COUNCIL
HISTORIC HERITAGE ITEM RECORD FORM

HERITAGE ITEM NAME former JR Bruce's Dominion Roller Flour Mills & Biscuit Factory

ADDRESS 24 High Street, Timaru

PHOTOGRAPH



(www)

DISTRICT PLAN ITEM NO. New **HNZ LIST No. & CATEGORY** 3157 / 2
(at time of assessment)

LEGAL DESCRIPTION Lot 1 DP 55633 & Lot 2 DP 55633

VALUATION NUMBER 2501101202 & 2501101201

DATE OF CONSTRUCTION 1916 + 1924-25

**ARCHITECT/DESIGNER/
BUILDER** Thomas Pringle (1916 mill plant); Herbert Hall, architect; Shillito Bros, builders (1921-22/1924 flour mill); Herbert Hall, architect; Messrs Munro & Prosser, builders (1924-25 biscuit and chocolate factory)

STYLE Industrial vernacular / American daylight factory style mill

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

Multi-level building cluster (one, two, three and five storeys in height), with irregular footprint and hipped and gabled roof forms. Multi-pane, steel-framed casement windows, concrete lintels in contrast colour to exposed brickwork. 'JR Bruce Ltd' lettering at top of former flour mill tower. Sawtooth roof on south-west wing. Classical door surround on office building at street front; pilasters, cornice, panelled door with fanlight.

MATERIALS/STRUCTURE

Brick, concrete, timber, corrugated metal.

ADDITIONS/ALTERATIONS

Reinstatement of mill building and biscuit factory additions (1941).

SETTING

The former flour mill and biscuit factory stand on the east side of High Street, north of its intersection with Catherine Street and immediately west of the Timaru railway line. The town centre lies to the north, the port of Timaru to the north-east and Timaru Hospital is to the south. The former railway reserve, on which was built a turntable in 1880, is immediately to

the south of the subject site. The extent of setting is both land parcels occupied by the former mill and factory. It is noted that the Heritage NZPT list entry relates only to Lot 1 DP 55633.

HISTORY

A company comprised of Messrs Wilson, Hutchison, Macaulay and Bruce established the Dominion Roller Flour Mill in High Street in 1915. The managing director, James Russell Bruce (1859-1941) was a nephew and son-in-law of Timaru mill owner James Bruce (see heritage item # 39). JR Bruce was also a member of the South Canterbury Electric Power Board and the South Canterbury Development League. Before building the Dominion mill, which produced the 'Silo' brand, Bruce had been involved in milling and land sales. A larger mill was built beside the small original mill in 1921-22. When the new mill was destroyed by fire in November 1923, Bruce erected a new five-storey flour mill, which was itself damaged by another fire in March 1941. The mill was once again reinstated, the roof and uppermost floor having been lost but the remainder of the building being gutted rather than destroyed by the blaze. In 1925 James R. Bruce Ltd began making biscuits, production of which continued in Timaru until 1955. The biscuit factory was a well-known visitor 'attraction' and it was featured in a 1931 film encouraging New Zealanders to buy New Zealand-made products. Production was doubled when a second oven was added in 1927 and during World War II over 4000 tons of biscuits were sent overseas to armed services personnel. In 1964 the Evans Atlas company and JR Bruce Ltd merged (Bruce Evans Ltd) in an attempt to compete with the dominant Timaru Milling Company. Less than a year after the merger the new company was bought out by AS Paterson and the flour mill converted to stock food production. The site was then taken over by the Timaru Milling Company in 1966. The property was divided into the two subject parcels in 1989 and the former mill and factory are now owned and occupied by Coupland's Stock Feeds.

HISTORICAL AND SOCIAL SIGNIFICANCE

The former JR Bruce's Dominion Roller Flour Mills & Biscuit Factory has historical significance for its association with JR Bruce, the 'Silo' and 'Bruce's Biscuits' brands, and the continued importance of milling in South Canterbury through the 20th century.

CULTURAL AND SPIRITUAL SIGNIFICANCE

The former JR Bruce's Dominion Roller Flour Mills & Biscuit Factory has cultural value as a demonstration of the way of life of its former operators and employees over many decades.

ARCHITECTURAL AND AESTHETIC SIGNIFICANCE

The former JR Bruce's Dominion Roller Flour Mills & Biscuit Factory has architectural significance as an industrial complex designed in large part by noted Timaru architect Herbert Hall. Hall (1887-1939) also designed the South Canterbury War Memorial in Timaru (1925, heritage item # 17), St David's Pioneer Memorial Church at Cave (1930) and the Chateau in Tongariro National Park (1928). At the time of his death in February 1940 Hall was reported as being the only New Zealander to have won a gold medal from the British Institute of Architects. Hall was architect to the Timaru Hospital Board, chairman of the Timaru Fire Board, and advisor to the Canterbury Electric Power Board, of which JR Bruce was a board member.

TECHNOLOGICAL AND CRAFTSMANSHIP SIGNIFICANCE

The former JR Bruce's Dominion Roller Flour Mills & Biscuit Factory has technological significance as a large-scale early 20th century flour mill and biscuit factory. Of the latter it was said when it opened 'that there is not another biscuit factory in Australasia that is so modernly equipped' (*Timaru Herald* 24 March 1925). The factory was initially run by electricity generated on site via a gas suction system. The earliest sections of the mill were built by local contractor Thomas Pringle (1847-1923), who was a Scottish-born builder and

contractor who spent some time in the United States before emigrating to New Zealand in 1878. Pringle was also the contractor for the Customhouse (1901-2, heritage item # 22).

CONTEXTUAL SIGNIFICANCE

The former JR Bruce's Dominion Roller Flour Mills & Biscuit Factory has contextual significance as a local landmark on High Street and as one of a number of large industrial structures that line the western boundary of the railway line as it passes through Timaru. It is the most recent and southern-most of the heritage mills in Timaru: the former Bruce's 'Royal Flouring Mills' / Timaru Milling Company mill (1881-82, heritage item # 39), former Belford Flour Mills (1877-78, heritage item # 40), and the former Evans Atlas Flour Milling Company grain stores and mill (c.1879, 1888, 1895 & 1897 +, heritage item # 42).

ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND SCIENTIFIC SIGNIFICANCE

Although the former mill and biscuit factory post-dates 1900 its site may have archaeological value in view of the location of the site and its proximity to the railway line and the original site of the turntable (1880) that was located at the eastern terminus of Catherine Street.

SUMMARY OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

The former JR Bruce's Dominion Roller Flour Mills & Biscuit Factory has overall heritage significance to Timaru and Timaru district as a whole. The building complex has historical significance for its association with JR Bruce and the brands of flour and biscuits he manufactured and cultural value as a demonstration of the way of life of those who operated the mill and factory. The former JR Bruce's Dominion Roller Flour Mills & Biscuit Factory has architectural significance as an industrial structure designed in large part by noted Timaru architect Herbert Hall and technological significance for its brick construction and detailing. The former JR Bruce's Dominion Roller Flour Mills & Biscuit Factory has contextual significance as a local historic feature; its site may have archaeological value in view of the building's location.

HERITAGE CATEGORY

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REFERENCES

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Extent of setting, 24 High Street, Timaru.



Mid/late-1920s view of JR Bruce's flour mill and biscuit factory. Note mansard roof on flour mill building, this was not reinstated after the 1941 fire. Pan-1481-F, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.